INSTANT HERALDRY!

10 SECRETS YOUR DM DOESN'T WANT YOU TO KNOW! P. 62

DRAGON

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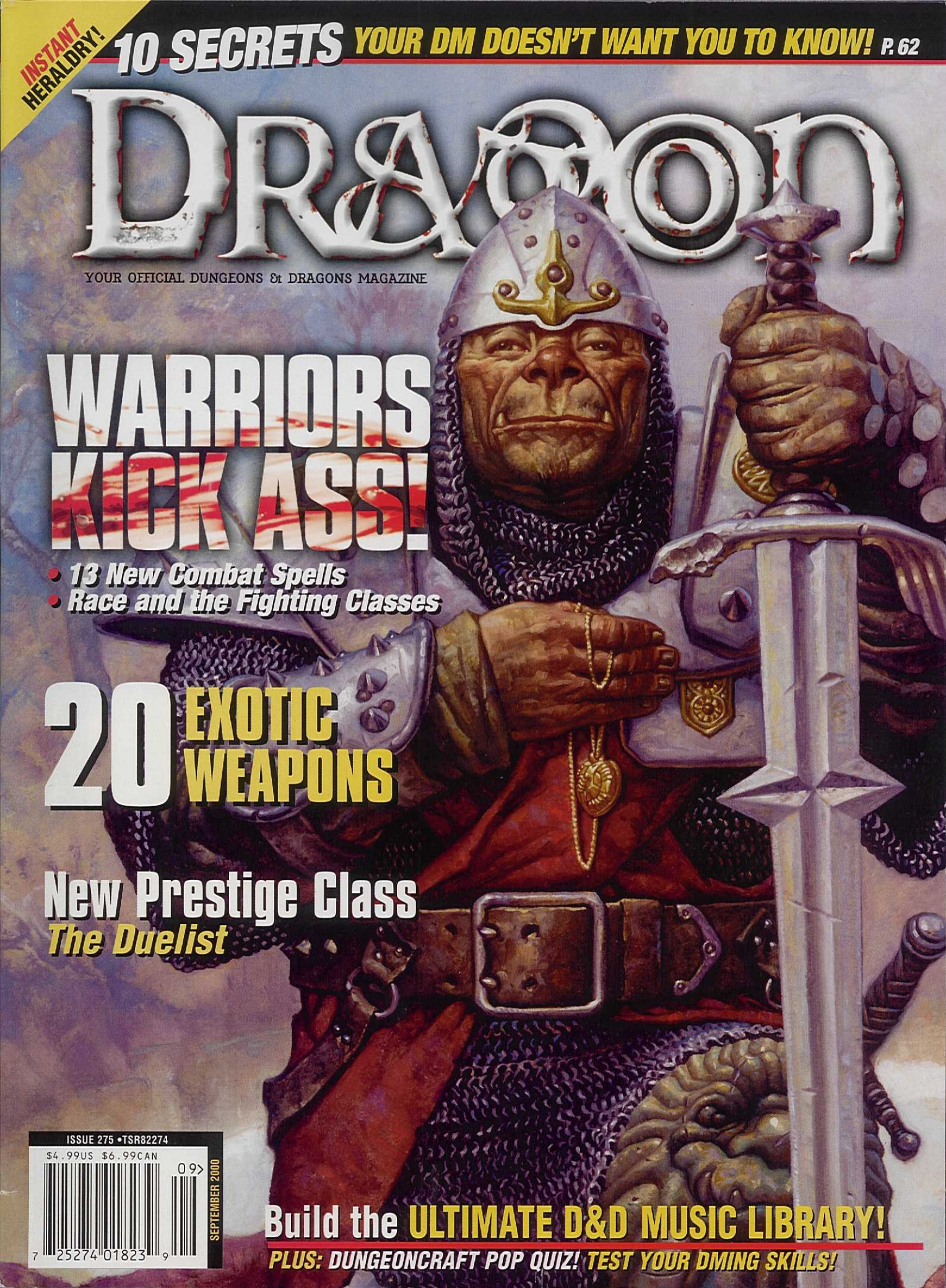

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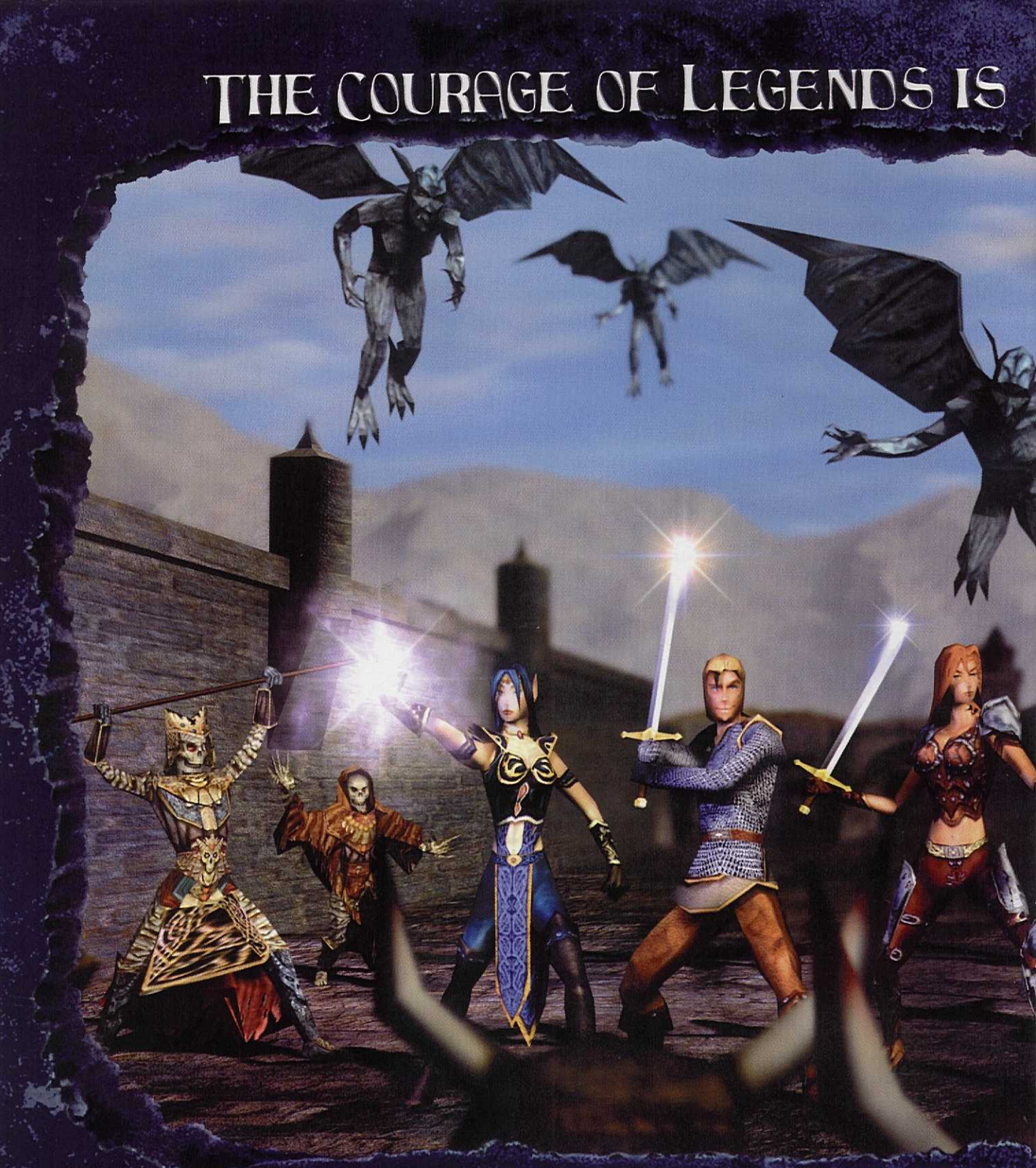

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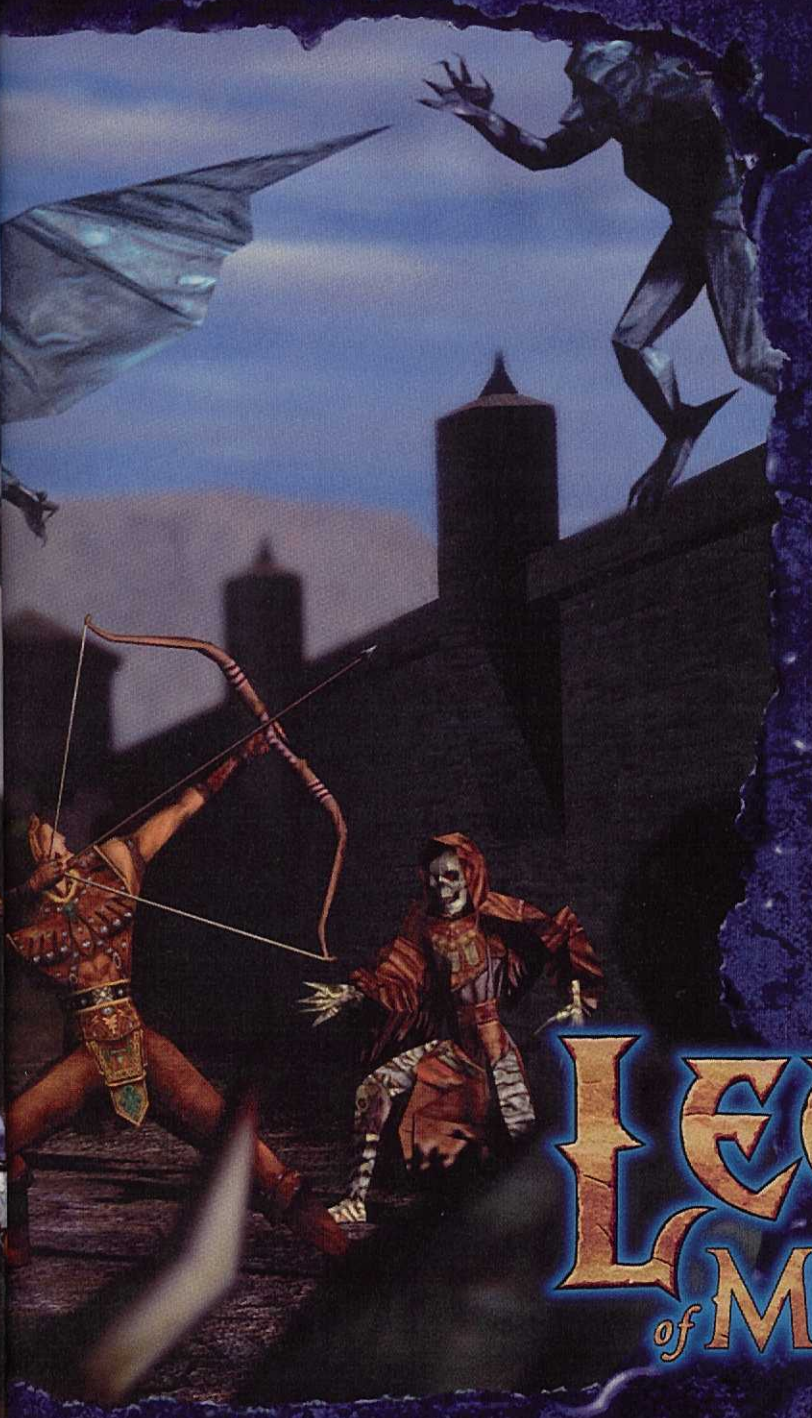

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Volume XXV, Number 4
September 2000

Fight, Fight, Fight!

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Cover artist Mark Zug can speak of his half-orc paladin far more eloquently than some draconian art director. He writes, "It is a cool, misty morning touched with biting frost. As his loyal squire prepares their mounts, the knight rededicates himself to his relentless quest—for life, his people, his faith, and his lady. Hardship cannot swerve him; none of the sundry trials of being a half-orc—the prejudice of humans and elves; finding armor that fits; the drizzle of snot that runs from his squat nose into his tusked mouth—can distract the resolve of his noble soul."

—Peter Whitley, Art Director

You Hear a Soft Cliché as the Chest Opens...

If you've played Dungeons & Dragons *more than once or twice, you already know how clichés can turn what should be heroic situations into dice-rolling contests about as thrilling as a game of* Yahtzee. *The same thing can happen to movies, meals, and magazines. Even the greatest stories grow old if told too often.*

Roleplaying is an exercise in visualization. Illustrations and maps can help with the mechanical aspects of combat and offer clues that work best when seen, but the core of the game is played in our imaginations. The beauty of this process is that the worlds come alive for each of us. It can also lead to painful misunderstandings. For example, in my D&D campaign, I imagine that my character looks like Nicolas Cage, while my fellow players envision me as Steve Buscemi.

Attentive readers might have noticed subtle changes in Dragon recently. Beyond adopting a new look to reflect the new edition, our goal was to make Dragon challenge your imagination as much as playing D&D does. You'll still find as much of the advice, fiction, and new things to use in your games, but we're hoping you also get a sense of the dirtiness of a dungeon crawl, the ancient breath of a gold dragon, or the smell of sweat radiating from a thief disarming a volatile trap. (Unfortunately, our printer informs us that orc-smelling inks are still on the horizon.) A game as flexible as D&D should have a magazine that never allows you, the reader, to stop and regain hit points.

Dragon Magazine's history is rich with compelling images, but you probably won't soon see a picture of a hearty adventuring party leaning over a pile of loot as a huge beast looms unseen over their heads. Yes, it's a classic joke. Yes, it's a part of the genre's history. Yes, it's a gag to be feared and respected. Mostly, though, it is one of the many clichés that hound the genre and the game.

There's plenty more, too. Let's not too quickly forget the warrior vixens clad in chainmail bikinis as they fade from these pages. Oops, don't want to forget the ale-swilling Dwarf celebrating his newfound wealth in his "horned viking" helmet (which I'm told the Vikings didn't even wear). These things have gone the way of the wizard's pointy cap. What you get in return is fresh imagery that carries the potential to help you reinvent the game your way.

In my fevered imagination, I would love to replace these tired old stories with what I feel are much more compelling images—specifically, the huge beast politely offers his treasure to the party. (But why?) The bikini-clad warrior has a Charisma score of 18 only in her mind. (While to others she is a generous 6 in dim light.) Our alcoholic dwarf in the funny hat plans on slaughtering each and every inn patron this evening while they sleep. These, to me, are much more interesting and suggest a story yet to be told. This is the essence of Dragon's new look: to reinvent the stories but not forsake the game.

Above all other considerations, *Dragon Magazine* is yours. As art director, I might have ideas that I think you'll enjoy, but you decide what is written and how it's presented. Though you probably already know it, I invite you to criticize, analyze, and improve upon this magazine—your magazine.

And if you see a dwarf in a viking helmet, sleep with one eye open.

Pete A.
CHAOTIC GOOD

Peter Whitley • Art Director

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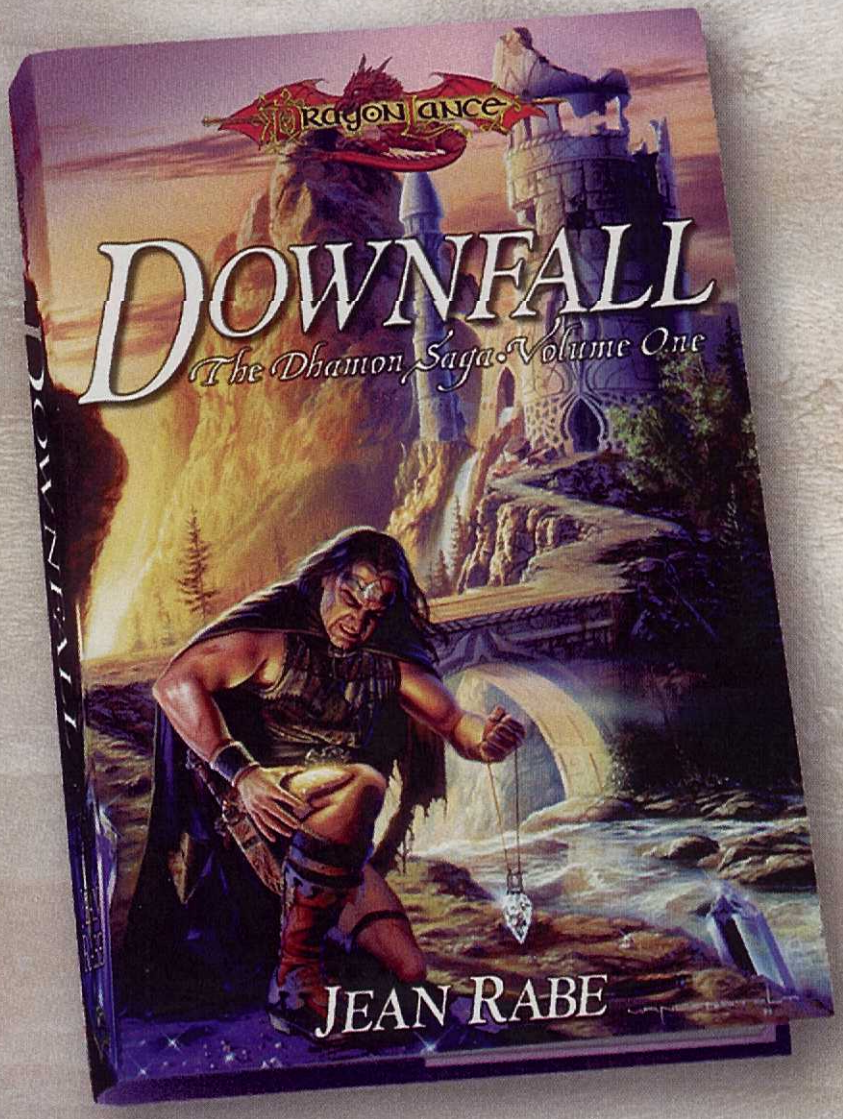

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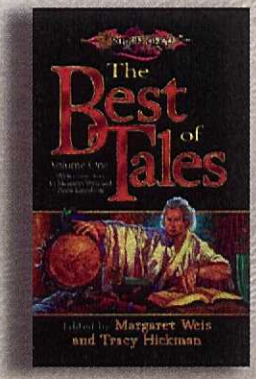

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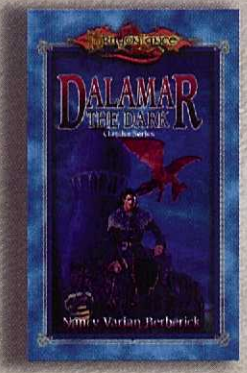

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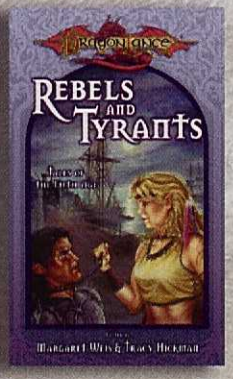

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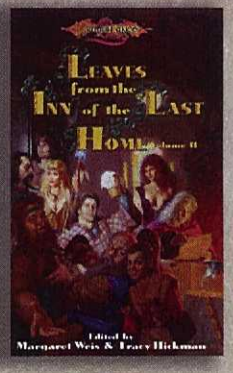

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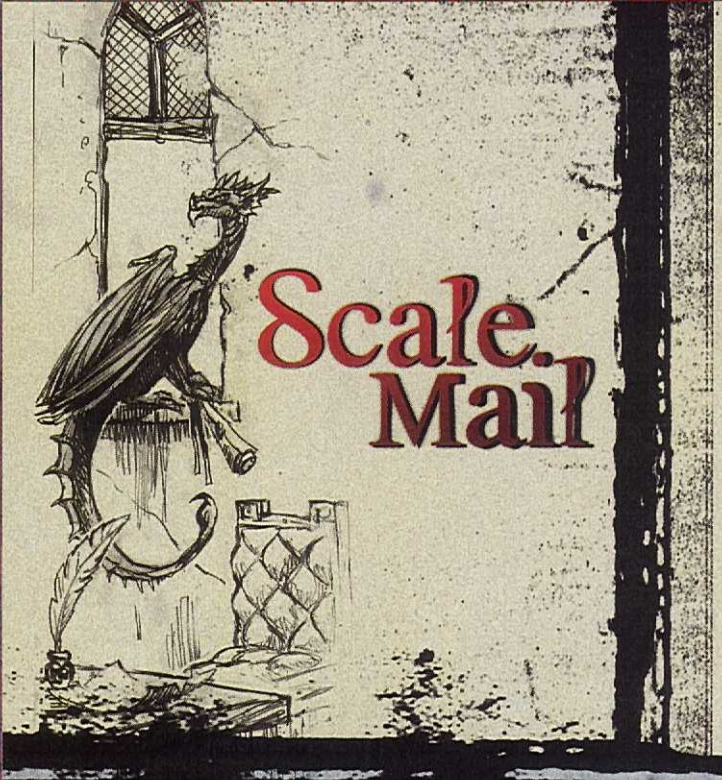

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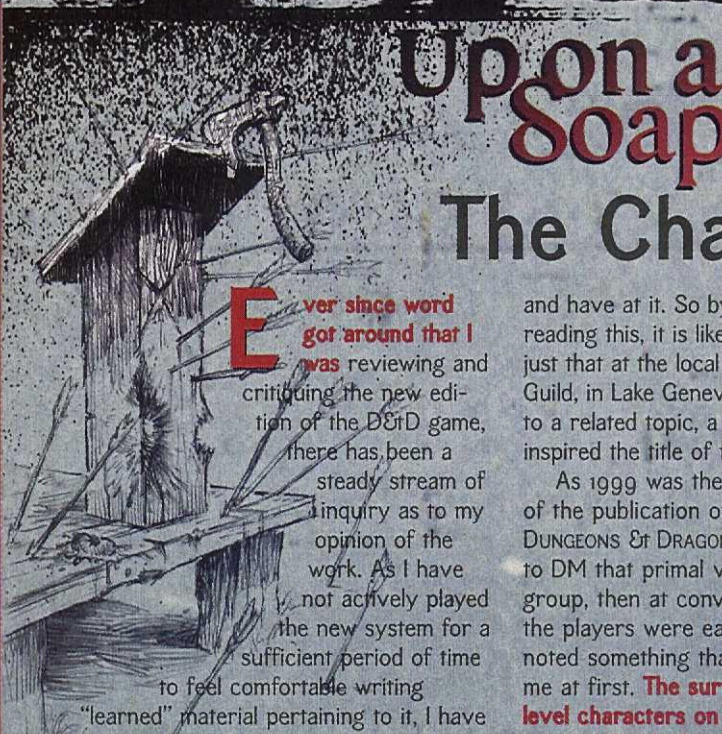


Up on a Soapbox

The Changing Play

By Gary Gygax

Ever since word got around that I was reviewing and critiquing the new edition of the D&D game, there has been a steady stream of inquiry as to my opinion of the work. As I have not actively played the new system for a sufficient period of time to feel comfortable writing "learned" material pertaining to it, I have been reticent. For the record, I have stated that it was intriguing to me and that I found the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* a "must read" for all Game Masters with a desire for excellence in developing the dungeon adventure. In addition, I have explained that as soon as the core system books are commercially available, **I intend to begin a campaign, "get in the trenches," and really learn the system.** It is different from AD&D, certainly, and there are many interesting aspects of the new game that I wish to explore and test. The best way to accomplish this is to get a group of young players together and have at it. So by the time you are reading this, it is likely that I will be doing just that at the local shop, the Game Guild, in Lake Geneva. Which brings me to a related topic, a part of what inspired the title of this month's essay.

As 1999 was the 25th anniversary of the publication of the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, I decided to DM that primal version for my own group, then at conventions. While all the players were eager to participate, I noted something that was astonishing to me at first. **The survival rate for 2nd-level characters on the 1st level of the original Castle Greyhawk dungeons was only about 20%!** Remarking on this at PentaCon, one "old hand" at dungeon adventuring, whose PC bit the dust, confessed something to this effect: "Gary, most players today are used to modules that are linear, where progression is mandatory. They have not learned about running away to fight another day ... and I forgot that early lesson."

Indeed, many adventures are linear, particularly computer roleplaying ones. Even with non-sequential computer games now being produced, and many of the old standard adventure modules having multiple paths possible, even necessary, to success, it seems as if most players today are bent on bulling ahead. The elementary skill of knowing when to retreat has been lost to many current gamers.

There must be a way through this. The key is knowing when the current situation and resources preclude immediate success. In other words, knowing when to run away!

Collaterally, and not to make too fine a point of it, **some approach other than hack-and-slash in the beginning**, some "yak-and-schmooze" perhaps, might have enabled passage through the area without conflict. Likely proponents of "roleplaying"—that is to say speaking in character and seeking solutions of a non-violent sort through interaction with NPCs and monsters—often forget, or simply dismiss, such possibilities when placed in a "dungeon crawl" setting. Naturally, neglect of the parlay option then brings about the self-fulfilling prophecy, to wit: "Dungeon crawls are nothing but hack-and-slash."

After a few weeks of pure exploration and combat-based dungeon

Anti-Dungeon Conspiracy

I remember the switch from 1st to 2nd Edition and how sorely it was needed. Although 2nd Edition has gone by too quickly, it seems, there is no denying the cumbersome proportions it has achieved. Thankfully, everything I have seen in previews of the new edition indicates that the developers are doing whatever it takes to make the new D&D a lean, mean, roleplaying machine.

Although I have not had the opportunity to playtest it, **every rule and revision in the new D&D seems utterly intuitive,** while the new character classes and abilities sound both exciting and well-balanced. And although the new edition characters look to be inherently more powerful than their counterparts in 2nd Edition, the myriad of feats and skills they command seems completely justified by the equally improved abilities of the new edition monsters. **Even the new artwork captures my imagination in a way that few illustrations ever have.**

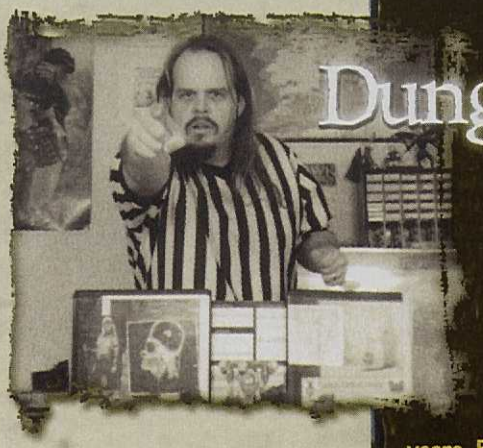
The only thing I am a little disappointed about is that, from what I have seen, it seems as if the Society and Ecology sections of monster descriptions are being cut out in the new edition. While I am sure there are some who will be glad to see them go, I personally found them to be indispensable tools for creating encounters with creatures that seemed to be a real part of their environment, as opposed to contrived opposition for the characters. As you might imagine, I greatly enjoy your "Dragon Ecologies" articles, so I hope that you will continue to publish them to help flesh out the monsters of the new edition.

Specific to issue #272, "Up on a Soapbox" finally hit home for me with "Hooray for the Dungeon Crawl!" Mr. Gygax has struck the nail squarely on the head in this article, exposing one of the grandest conspiracies in all of roleplaying—to take the "dungeons" out of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. Perhaps "conspiracy" is too strong a word, but our beloved game would be irreparably crippled were campaigns to cease incorporating adventures back in 1972, it became evident that the setting needed many other facets. **Problem solving and negotiation were essential elements of play in subterranean settings from 1973 on.** For roleplaying opportunities, consider the city of Erelhei Cindlu in *Vault of the Drow*. No power gaming approach would have a chance there. That few DMs took advantage of the place to test their players' combat abilities, and that fewer players complained of that neglect, might be indicative of something common to all participants. No matter what mode of play is in vogue, GMs desire player approval. Players, while interested in GM approval, are more interested in personal gratification. Whether this comes through having the most powerful PC, the one that is "always in character," or whatever, it means a game persona that is extant, not dead. The only satisfactory PC demise is one so remarkable that the character thereafter lives on in the legend of the campaign.

Whatever the game system, its emphasis, and the mode in which it is played, there is a constant in gaming. **All participants want longevity of play.** This is achieved through many things: a good game system, campaign world setting, DM, and players. That "good" is a subjective judgment is unquestionable. That subjectivity is why we have so many different roleplaying games, genres thereof, world settings, and varying emphasis on one or another of the elements that go into the game.

Has play changed over a quarter of a century? Aside from the increase of available options, not much. The minor thing noted above is not different per se. It is just a bit of knowledge needed to be re-learned. In the case of the roleplaying game that is destined for longevity, the more things change, the more they are the same.

Dungeon Master of the Month



Eric Edmonds

Eric started playing the STAR FRONTIERS™ game at age 12 with his younger brother Chad. Eventually, he moved on to the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS basic set, where he ran modules for years until he discovered ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS and the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting. **For six years, Eric ran one of the most intriguing FORGOTTEN REALMS campaigns that I have ever participated in.**

During that campaign, we were transported to the Demiplane of Dread in the RAVENLOFT setting, where not even the wise Van Richten could prevent us from being killed by Strahd Von Zarovich on numerous occasions.

Eventually, Eric needed a new challenge, so he got behind the screen for many AL-QADIM and DARK SUN campaigns. However, those campaign worlds could not keep up with his writing skills, so he focused his attention on the father of all campaign settings: the world of GREYHAWK.

Eric can only now show his superiority as a Dungeon Master. He has vowed to run D&D games for the rest of his life, and he plans to continue with the GREYHAWK setting for many years to come.

Having been on both sides of the DM screen, Eric knows what players want. **He takes his duties as a DM seriously, wearing a referee's jersey and using a "call bell" just in case we even think of getting out of character at the table.**

Though Eric tried to get a job as a janitor at TSR after meeting a staffer at the GEN CON Game Fair in 1993, the closest he has come to being published was in the letters column in issue #129 of *DRAGON*.

Eric is now 28 and married to a beautiful woman named Maria, who has been roleplaying for three years. He loves D&D so much that he even named his cats Bigby and Tenser.

Eric gives everything he has to being the best, and I believe that he is.

Joe Manning • Henderson, TN

dungeons simply because players and DMs alike were afraid of being branded "immature" and excommunicated from the society of "true" roleplayers. **Not only is the dungeon a classic element of the fantasy genre, it is a vital tool for acquainting new players with the game,** and for allowing neophyte DMs to try out new ideas while honing their skills in a controlled environment. Moreover, creating a satisfying dungeon adventure can be one of the greatest challenges for an experienced DM; winning the appreciation of a seasoned group of players for a well-constructed dungeon is commendation enough for any dungeon master.

Lastly, the "Bahamut and Tiamat" article was a lot of fun. While normally I do not get excited about articles introducing new spells, monsters, or magic items, this one was an exception. Both the writing and the artwork revitalized these two classic characters in my mind, and helped pull them out of the world of DRAGONLANCE and back into the realm of generic D&D, ready to appear in any campaign. That Mr. Williams was not afraid to grant them ability scores truly worthy of semi-divine beings was also refreshing.

Keep up the good work, *DRAGON*! I'm counting the days until the new edition of D&D.

Jeffery Ludwig • Oakland, CA

The smaller space devoted to ecology and society information in the new MONSTER MANUAL delights us because it makes more room for those "Creature Codex" articles, which you can expect to see as regularly as we receive good submissions for it. ***Check out this month's installment, Johnathan Richards's "Ecology of the Darkmantle," and see just how chilling the new D&D monsters can be.***

My attitude toward the new edition has changed dramatically, from initial shock to an "I can hardly wait" feeling

Swell Shocked

Since the day that I became aware that Wizards of the Coast had officially announced the coming of the new edition of the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game, I've been watching the progress with a fair deal of interest. When the news first came to me, I was quite shocked and disappointed, and I remember many were that day. Of course, there were many folks who insisted that good would come of it. It took me only a day or so to get over my initial shock, and although for some time I still was not exactly looking forward to the new edition, I at least felt more or less, well, neutral. **I then bought my first copy of the *DRAGON Magazine* in January (issue #267), after hearing from a friend that information on 3rd Edition was being showcased in the magazines.** I had been reading the FAQs and interviews on Wizard's site, but I was eager for more information.

I must say, after reading the articles presented here in *DRAGON*, that my attitude toward the new edition has changed dramatically, from initial shock to an "I can hardly wait" feeling that seems to be spreading rapidly among the folks here in Canada. **While there's nothing technically "wrong" with the 2nd Edition rules, I can now easily spot the places where improvement was welcome**, and needed. The new art is fantastic, and Wizard's newest addition to their website, a small preview of the *Player's Handbook*, left me rather amazed at the quality of the new edition, in look and in feel. I must say that I'm most optimistic about the success level of 3rd Edition. I'd like to congratulate everyone who worked on the new edition in any way. You've all helped make the game that I've come to enjoy a better one, and now I can enjoy it even more. If ever I was asked to express my opinion on 3rd Edition D&D with a single word, it would simply be, "heroic."

Rylee Isitt • Lower Nicola, Canada

Profiles

Game designer Monte Cook is used to questions about the new edition of the D&D game. "[It] allows for more flexible character customization with feats and skills, and gives characters more options to choose from in play," is how he sums it up. "Some people have thought that this was just strictly a 'power up,' but really it's about giving more options and having more fun. It more clearly balances the classes, both in power and in how much fun they are to play."

Monte should know: Along with Jonathan Tweet and Skip Williams, the 32-year-old designer has just put the finishing touches on the new edition of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*. (All three

What Class Should You Play in the new D&D Game?

"Well, there's no 'best class'—they're all good. But people who have always avoided playing clerics should give them another look; they're much cooler. And people should also give rogues ('thieves' in 2nd Edition) a long, hard look—they've really improved in the new edition as well."

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June Pride

The June issue was the best in a long time. Ever since it was hinted at several months ago, I've been anticipating the release of the stats on Tiamat and Bahamut. Of course, now that I've seen them, I realize that I'll probably never be able to use them. **A creature (okay, so he's a god) with 1,086 hit points is a bit above even my crew of "Bring it on!" gamers.** But, did you mess up in this article? You gave me enough hints about the new edition and info that I can actually understand it now! Needless to say, I'm eagerly awaiting the new release. Gotta have it!

"Dragon Psionics" contained some good info. I don't personally use gem dragons in my campaign, but I've always thought that the gems were neglected, both in *Council of Wyrms* and D&D.

"How to Talk to a Dragon" came along just in time. My players (just the paladin, actually) were just about to encounter a black dragon. The outcome was much better with a little dialog and no actual trading of blows. **In the end, the paladin was fooled into releasing the dragon to keep his word. He'll be paying penance for awhile, considering that the dragon immediately flew off and wrecked havoc in a nearby farming community.**

"The Secret Library of Vecna" was really cool. I meant to write earlier about this subject. The articles that involve a slew of new spells are not really needed all that much. After all, there's currently a spell for any occasion. Four volumes of them. The "Greyhawk Grimoires" and articles like "The Secret Library of Vecna" are much better, giving information on spell books and scrolls, like who they belonged to, where they've been, and what the spells were used for—this is a really useful tool for detail-oriented DMs.

There are a few bones to pick now. First "Up on a Soapbox" seems like a waste of good advertising space.

Finally, please put the date back on the spine. You only did it for a few months, but it was a great idea for those of us who file our mags on a bookshelf. I can often recall what month I read an article, but not what issue number it came from. It was a good idea; please put it back.

On a scale of 1 to 10, *Dragon*'s artwork rates around a 99. Awesome! If *Dragon* keeps up its current quality and content, I'm a subscriber for life. Great work!

Louie S. Fox-Bishop • Panama City, FL

By your command, the date is now back on the spine. What do you think of the new cover treatment?

designers contributed to the three core books, then each designer actually wrote one of the books based on those contributions.) **After 22 years of roleplaying—mostly as a DM**—Monte has the opportunity to add his experience and advice to a product that was in design for slightly over two years. "The new *Dungeon Master's Guide* is probably the work I'm most proud of," he admits. When Gary Gygax, D&D's creator and author of the first *DMG*, commented on the new *DMG*, his feedback to the team was a point of pride and accomplishment for Monte. "He said that the material in the new *DMG* would help him become a better DM," Monte says. "That was really cool—and satisfying in a 'completion of the circle' sort of way."

He Got Game

Those twenty-two years of roleplaying have led Monte to work on an impressive number of different roleplaying supplements and core products, including the conspiracy game Dark•Matter (1999) and dozens of supplements to the Planescape setting for D&D. "I started work with TSR as a freelancer in 1992, writing a whole slew of stuff for the old Marvel game that never came out because the game was canceled."

Prior to joining the TSR team (where he designed most of his favorite works: Dark•Matter, *Dead Gods*, and *A Paladin in Hell* in 1998, the *Planewalker's Handbook* in 1996, and *Labyrinth of Madness* in 1995), **Monte worked for Iron Crown Enterprises for four years, two as a freelancer and two as a full-time designer.** Now a Senior Designer at Wizards of the Coast, he's found working on the new edition of the D&D game to be an extremely satisfying experience, but it's not been without its challenges. "For a while, instead of multiclassing, we were going to create full-blown classes that melded aspects of two classes," he says when discussing what didn't make the cut. "Instead of multiclassing as a wizard and a fighter, you'd choose the class 'warrior mage' or some such." Other ideas—like a half-dozen variations of the initiative system or a shaman-like class with spirits that guided the character—simply didn't work out. Most, Monte notes, evolved into concepts that exist in the game in its final form. "Only a very few," he says, "were just outright cuts."

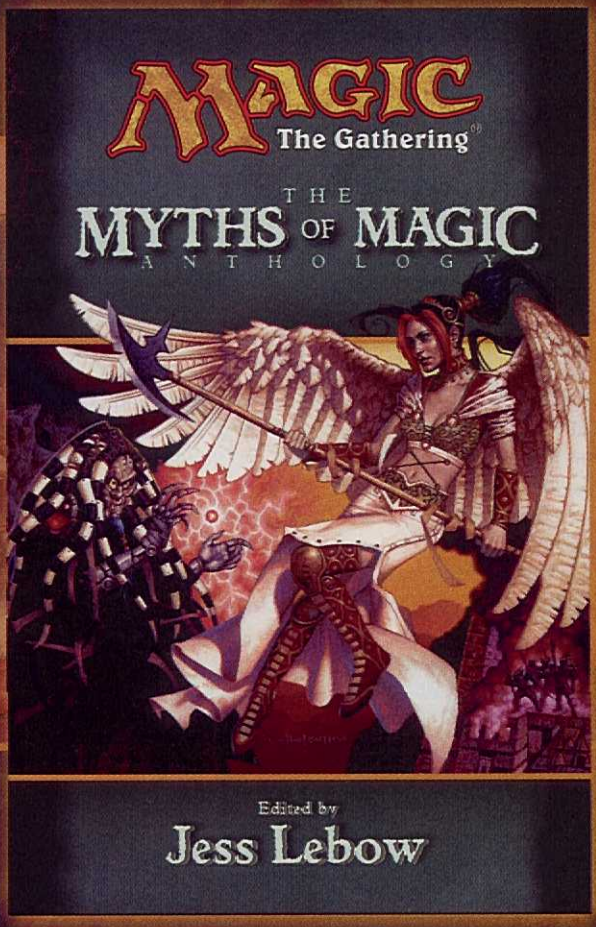
As the game stands now, Monte feels that it's much better than it was before. "It provides a smoother play experience due to standardized mechanics," he says. "You always roll a d20 and you want high rolls, specifically some number that the DM sets." He hopes that future designers will

If You Could Adapt a Book, Film, or TV Show to Roleplaying ...

"... I'd choose to work on something else," Monte freely admits. **"I like creating original material more than adapting the work of someone else.** I'm not disparaging such work, as I think some of it has been done really well—it's just not for me."

When pressed, however, Monte is able to offer up at least one title that he wouldn't mind working on: Stephen Donaldson's *The Land* from *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*. "This is a wonderful place full of really powerful magic and great characters," he says. "Think what you will of Covenant—I know a lot of people hate the character—but The Land encompasses great concepts that would lend themselves well to a roleplaying game. Everything is black and white in a vibrant way, for forces of Evil literally corrupt the surroundings, and Good can visibly heal."

Johnny Appleseed this ain't.



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Next, we present Bruce Beyer's ferocious rebuttal to Oliver Dickinson's comments in issue #273, *mainly so we can print the word "balderdash." Of course, we had to condense it from its heroic length, but we love to watch dueling historians. If this fight keeps going, we'll move it over to the basement of "Forum," where the first rule is, "Don't talk about 'Forum.'"*

Fight!

My suspicions about modern man's insecurities are confirmed on a regular basis, especially when some pompous critic writes that an ancient general haphazardly effected a victory, or that an ancient scientist stumbled upon a discovery, or that the pyramids were constructed by little green men from space. **The facts are that the ancient man was physically more adept, more intelligent, and most assuredly more gallant and honorable than we are.**

The first pyramid in Egypt was constructed in 2600 B.C. and still exists today. Modern buildings last rarely more than 50 years before becoming unstable. The Romans built a vast infrastructure connected by an intricate network of roads, many of which became modern autobahns.

Ancient man's physical superiority can best be illustrated through the work of Homer (7th-Century B.C.), who writes about the men of the Trojan War (1,200 B.C.). He writes, "In a time when men were stronger than they are now..." Another example of ancient man's physical superiority can be found in the writings of Xenophon (404 B.C.), a Greek cavalry lieutenant who lead a march of 10,000 hoplites out of Persia after the defeat of Cyrus the Younger. They covered a distance of over 2,000 miles—no modern army could accomplish such a feat.

Now to put modern man's mental capacity into perspective. Heraclides of Pontus (350 B.C.) derived that the earth rotates on its axis once every 24 hours, and Aristarchus had developed a heliocentric solar system in 310 B.C., 1700 years prior to Copernicus. **Eratosthenes calculated the Earth's circumference, without the aid of Hubble,** to 250,000 stades, within 20% of the precise circumference (in 235 B.C.). Hipparchus concluded the length of the lunar month to within one second of the modern value (in 200 B.C.). Ptolemy of Egypt wrote many great treatises to include the Almagest, Planetary Hypothesis, and Optics during the last century B.C. He can be credited with being the father of modern calculus.

A true historian must research several resources, discard inconsistencies, and make conclusions on common recordings.

An example of gallantry, honor, and esprit de corps unknown to the majority today is the battle of Thermoplaye in which 300 Spartan soldiers, lead by their king Leonidas, delayed the advance of nearly 100,000 Persian soldiers. Against overwhelming numbers, the Spartans managed to fend off the larger Persian Army for two days until an Athenian traitor showed the Persian king a goat trail around the pass. The Spartans fought valiantly to the last man after being completely enveloped by the Persians. Tales of the sound of the battle echoing from the pass by bypassing Persian soldiers abound.

recognize the value of these standardized mechanics and not "take a step backward" to reinstitute subsystems for rolling. He points out that **"2nd Edition had similar, but actually very different, methods for resolving saving throws, attacks rolls, and ability checks, for example."** The new system is certain to make life, both real and imaginary, easier for players and DMs alike.

What's Cooking

Monte doesn't mind taking his work home with him: He currently runs a single D&D campaign for two different groups of players. "Each group plays on a different night," he explains, "but it all takes place in the same setting."

Now that the *Dungeon Master's Guide* is finished and the new edition of D&D has hit the streets, you'd think that Monte could take it easy for a while. Not a chance. "There's a great deal of exciting stuff coming for the new edition," he says, "like some really cool adventures, a psionics book, and books for prestige classes and feats."

Monte is personally working on an adventure that takes characters from 3rd level to as high as 15th; *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil* is scheduled for release in mid-2001. As you might expect, "it deals with the return of evil forces to the original temple, but there's lots of completely new material," Monte promises. It would seem that there was more going on with "Elemental Evil" than was previously thought, and this time around the PCs will come face-to-face with it all.

"It's a great time to be working here," Monte says happily of his involvement with Wizards of the Coast and Dungeons & Dragons, "because every product is big, important, and innovative." D

The Montiest of Cons

You've probably never heard of it—since it's not really a convention but a gaming weekend for a big group of friends—but after four MonteCons, **it's quite the weekend experience.** "MonteCon 1 was a joke, literally," Monte explains. "Back in Lake Geneva, five or six years ago now, I had some friends over and we played a couple of games. The joke got started that it was 'MonteCon.' We even made badges the next day and handed them out to everyone who was there."

A few years and half a country later, Monte and his wife, Sue Weinlein Cook, wanted to have a housewarming party ... but not the usual kind of housewarming party. Instead, Monte and Sue hosted a "games until your ears bleed" weekend, one filled with a variety of different games all being played at once. Thus was reborn "MonteCon."

In addition to having six or seven games running simultaneously, MonteCon now has badges, program booklets, and even a movie room. **"We get about 60 attendees every year," Monte says, "some of them coming from California, Wisconsin, and Canada. There's a lot of gaming, a lot of food, and everyone seems to have a great time."**

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I will now address my critic, to whom I must suggest that you cannot rely on one source of historical information, especially those of the English derivative. In my opinion, English writers tend to put an English spin on everything. **A true historian must research several resources, discard inconsistencies, and make conclusions on common recordings.**

Do I believe that Ramses the Great's victory at Kadesh was a near escape from disaster? **Balderdash, no, most certainly not.** To suggest that Ramses' interdiction of the Hittite Army was a mere accident is to sell short perhaps one of the greatest tactical minds of all time. Ramses skillfully planned the cordoning of Kadesh by placing portions of his armies on key avenues to and from the city in order to isolate it. The city could neither be reinforced from outlying Hittite forces nor could those in the city escape without coming into contact with the Egyptian forces. When Muwatalli learned that Ramses was moving against Kadesh, he moved quickly to reinforce his city and, in doing so, made contact with Ramses' army. This was no accident.

As far as the Hittites go, little was known of this culture, and there was no physical evidence to confirm their existence for nearly 3,000 years, until 1906 A.D. when actual evidence of this civilization was uncovered in modern Turkey. Prior to 1906 A.D., the Hittites existed only in biblical writings and ancient texts, primarily Egyptian.

The Sea Peoples were not one people but a compilation of cultures. I do not doubt the possibility that their ranks were swollen with veteran Greek warriors (Achaeans) of the Trojan War, since that war occurred only ten years prior to the advance of the Sea Peoples on Egypt. The Greeks, by nature, were notorious sea raiders; in fact, you could say they were pirates.

In conclusion, I will say that it is obvious that we have a lot to learn from ancient man. We have done little to expound upon the work already completed by our forefathers or even to apply cognizant thought as to how they achieved the great wonders they did. **Instead we throw up our hands in frustration and conclude that ancient space men are responsible.** Sources. He says he wants sources. School is now in session.

... it is obvious that we have a lot to learn from ancient man.

The Beginnings of Western Science. David C. Lindberg. University of Chicago Press, 1992.

The Persian Expedition: Xenophon. Rex Warner, trans. Penguin Books, 1949.

The Odyssey. Homer. Robert Fagles, trans. Penguin Books, 1996.

The Harper Encyclopedia of Military History from 3500 B.C. to Present (4th edition). Ernest R. & Trevor N. Dupuy. Harper-Collins publishing, 1993.

Gods and Myths of Ancient Egypt. Mary Barnett. Regency House Publishing, 1996.

The Ancient Mariners (Seafarers Collection). Time Life Books. 1980.

Eastern Asia and Classical Greece. JM Roberts, New York Oxford university Press, 1998.

Bruce F. Beyers • Watertown, NY

And that's all for this episode of ***Historian Deathmatch****. Will Oliver return for a rematch next month? Or has the mighty Beyers dealt him a finishing blow? There's only one way to know, and that's to join us again in 30 days. Let's get ready to rumble!*

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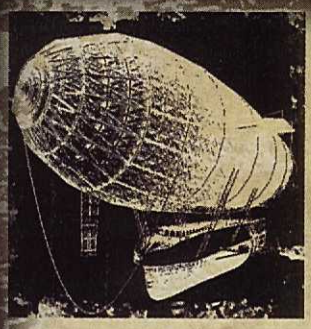

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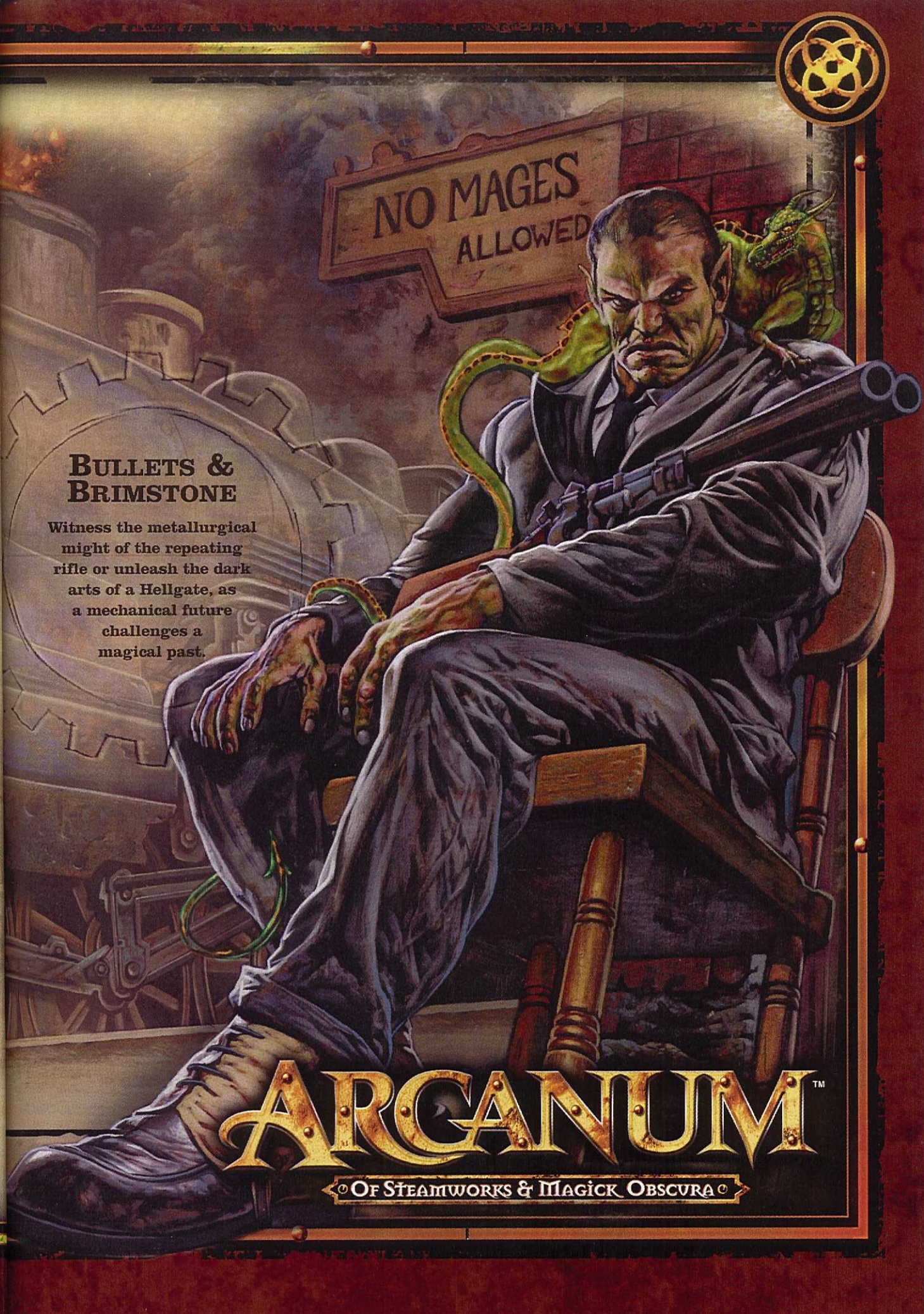
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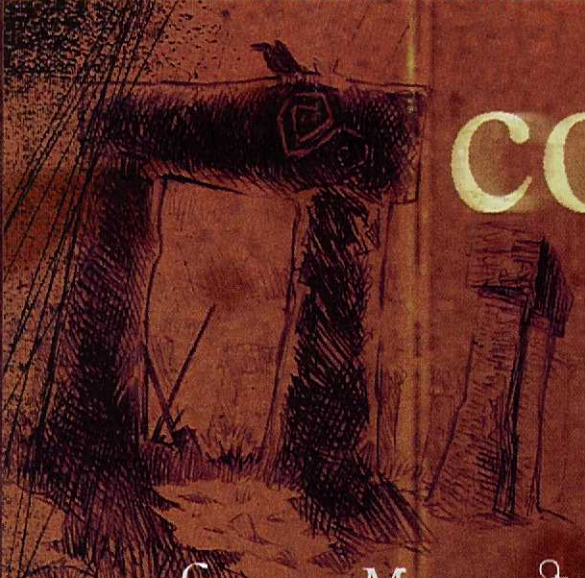

convention calendar

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Online event
Convention

september

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					CONQUEST2000 • MILLBRAE WINCON • WINNIPEG From the Dragon's Mouth one	two
three	CONQUEST2000 • MILLBRAE WINCON • WINNIPEG four	RPGA Tonight five	six	seven	Designers' Guild eight	RATCON III • LEBANON Totally Twisted Trivia nine
ten	eleven	Deck Deconstruction Seminar twelve	thirteen	fourteen	RPG Hour fifteen	sixteen
seventeen	eighteen	Industry Edge nineteen	twenty	twenty-one	COGCON8 • ROLLA Totally Twisted Trivia twenty-two	twenty-three
COGCON 8 • ROLLA twenty-four	twenty-five	twenty-six	twenty-seven	SHORECON 2000 • CHERRY HILL twenty-eight	TRINOC-CON 2000 • DURHAM twenty-nine	BEDLAM • TORONTO thirty

RPG Hour

Dungeon Master's Guide and The Sunless Citadel

So you've got your mitts on the *PH* last month—now you'll need to know what evil plans you can cook up for your play group as a DM! Monte Cook talks about the *Dungeon Master's Guide* specifics, and Bruce Cordell weighs in on the first 3rd Edition adventure: *The Sunless Citadel*. September 15, 5:00 P.M. PDT

Industry Edge

Tips on Getting Your Fiction Published II

By popular request, "Wizards Presents ..." is reprising "Tips on Getting Your Fiction Published" with Forgotten Realms books editor Lizz Baldwin. Whether your interest is future sci-fi or medieval fantasy, if you've ever dreamed of seeing your name in print, this is the chat to attend. September 19, 5:00 P.M. PDT

Designers' Guild

Welcome to Star Wars

The release of this much anticipated roleplaying game is just around the corner and Wizards of the Coast can't wait any longer to reveal some of the details of how Star Wars plays out on the tabletop using the d20 system. Hear members of the game's design team leak info on how aspiring Jedi can battle or join the dark side. September 8, 5:00 P.M. PDT

Totally Twisted Trivia

Come Demonstrate your Trivia Authority!

Been playing D&D since you were just out of the cradle? Own every supplement TSR ever printed? Well, even if you don't, we invite you to test your knowledge in the Totally Twisted Trivia game. Prizes will be awarded! Hosted by your Wizards.Community WizOs. September 9 and 22, 9:00 P.M. PDT

Deck Deconstruction Seminar

Magic: World's Champ Interview

Randy turns roving reporter this month, instead of holding his usual deck poll, Randy boards a plane and checks out Magic Worlds in Brussels from August 2–6th. For tonight's chat he'll talk deck tech with the newly crowned World's champ. It's good to be king! September 12, 5:00 P.M. PDT

From the Dragon's Mouth

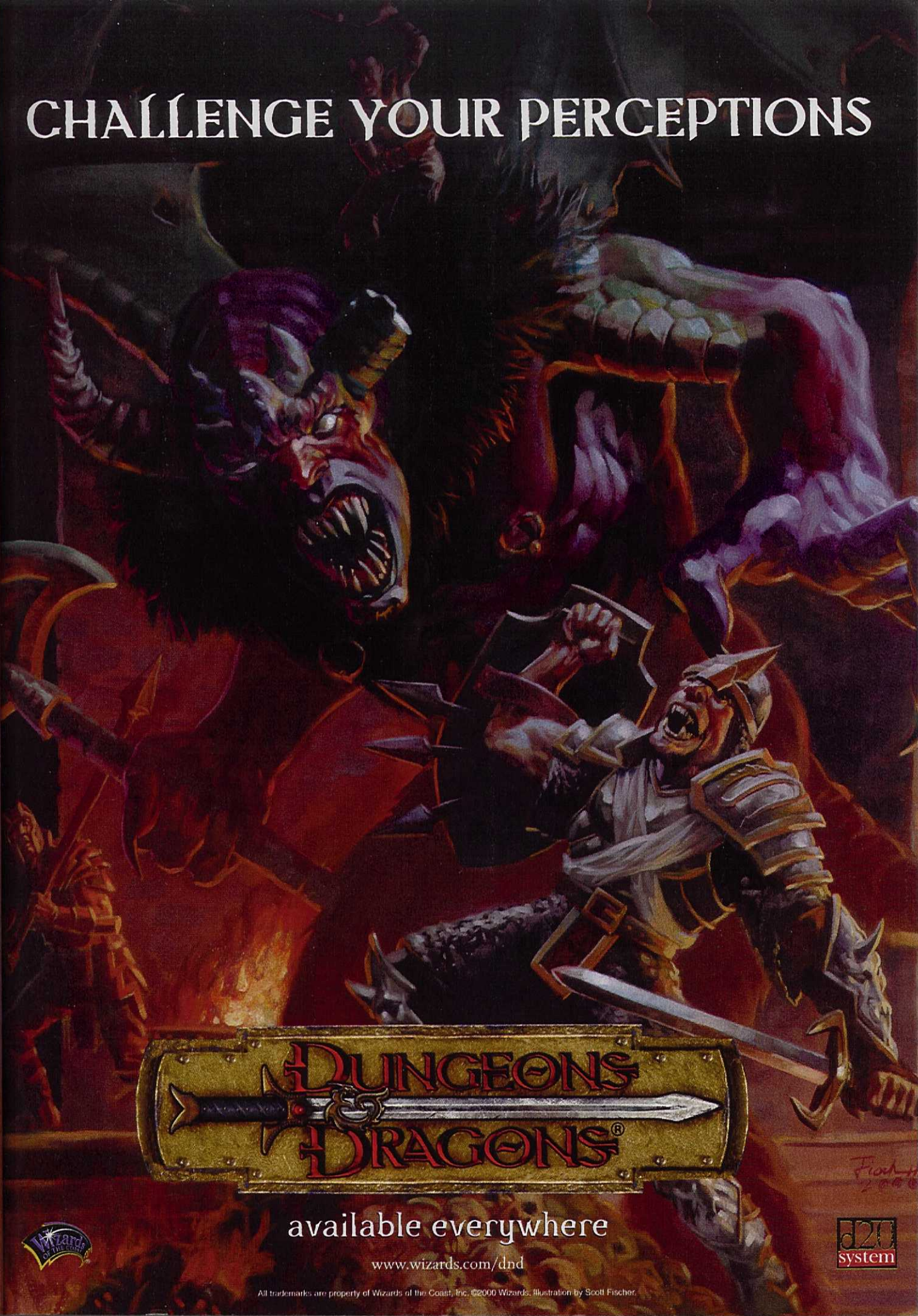
Mapmaking 101

Dave Gross and Chris Perkins answer your questions about map creation. September 1, 5:00 P.M. PDT

RPGA Tonight

Meet David Wise

The Worldwide RPGA Manager, David Wise, will host an hour about ... himself. Find out what he is like, and the global strategies for RPGA in the years to come. September 5, 5:00 P.M. PDT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september events

CONQUEST2000
September 1-4 CA
Clarion Hotel, Millbrae.
Contact: PMB 1422
467 Saratoga Ave.
San Jose CA 95129.
Email: info@con-quest.com
Website: www.con-quest.com
Featuring: RPGs, LARPs, miniatures, board games, computer games, flea market, auction, painting contests.

COGCON8
September 22-24 MO
University Center East, Rolla.
Contact: Robert Hobart
300 Foxcreed Rd.
Rolla, MO 65401.
Website: www.rollanet.org/~cogcon
Email: youta@rollanet.org
Featuring: RPGA events including: ALTERNITY, AD&D, LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATH™, LIVING JUNGLE™.

WINCON
September 1-3 Canada
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
Contact: David KW Derksen
P.O. Box 28073
1795 Henderson Hwy.
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G1P3
Canada.
Website:
www.pangea.ca/~greywolf/wincon.htm
Email: wincon@greywolf.mb.ca
Featuring: Highlander TCG, Canadian Nationals, Squig Hopper Derby, RPG tournament, TCGs, RPGA events, Vampire LARP.

SHORCCON 2000
September 28-Oct. 1 NJ
Cherry Hill Hilton, Cherry Hill.
Contact:Complete Strategy Gaming
P.O. Box 1984
Brick, NJ, 08723.
Email:
shorecon2000@gameconvention.com
Website: www.gameconvention.com

RATCON III
September 9 IN
The Auditorium, 4-H Fairgrounds
Lebanon.
Contact: RatCon III
730 N. Jameson St.
Lebanon, IN 46052.
Email: ratcon3@yahoo.com
Website: www.subverbis.com/ratcon.htm
Featuring: Six different TCG tournaments, miniatures, board games, RPGs.

TRINOC-CON 2000
Sept. 29-Oct. 1 NC
Durham Marriott & Civic Center, Durham.
Gaming Guest of Honor: Skip Williams.
Contact: Trinoc-con
P.O. Box 10633
Raleigh, NC 27605-0633.
Email: trinoccon@aol.com
Website: www.trinoc-con.org
Featuring: RPGA, D&D, TCGs, LARPs, art show, literary panels.

BEDLAM
September 30 Canada
Days Inn, Toronto, Ontario.
Contact: The General Staff
17B Wales Ave.
Toronto, Ontario, M5T1J2.
Email: generalstaff@canada.com
Website: www.dpsimpson.com
Hours 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. Auction 12 P.M. to 3 P.M. Games begin 9:30 A.M.

October events

MANAFEST 2000
October 6-8, CA
San Mateo Marriott, San Mateo.
Contact: ManaFest
P.O. Box 170436
San Francisco, CA 94117.
Email: info@manafest.com
Website: www.manafest.com
Featuring: CCGs, board games, roleplaying games, and miniatures.

KNIGHT GAMES
October 20-22, NY
Berkeley-Carroll School, Brooklyn.
Contact: Knight Games
P.O. Box 3041
Brooklyn, NY 11202-3041.
Email: knghtgames@aol.com
Proceeds benefit Camp Friendship
Featuring: RPGA premier events, RPGs, board games, railroad games, and CCGs.

JVL-CON 2000
October 28-29 WI
Best Western, Janesville.
Contact: Ray Norton
1316 Monterey Lane
Janesville, WI 53546.
Website: members.aol.com/rayshobby
Email: rayshobby@aol.com
Featuring: RPGA events, contests, Halloween party, and more.

November events

CARNAGE ON THE MOUTAIN
November 3-5 VT
Ascutney Mountain Ski Resort, Brownsville.
Contact: Carnage on the Mountain
64 County Road Hartland
Widsor, VT 05089.
Website: carnagecon@aol.com
Featuring: RPGA events, computer games, board games, miniatures, LARPs, CCGs, hay rides, and dealer room.

PROTOCON 2000
November 3-5 TX
Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M University, College Station.
Contact:The Gaming Club
Texas A&M University
Student Organization and Finance Center
P.O. Box 5688 Aggieland Station
College Station, TX 77844-9081.
Website: gaming.tamu.edu/protocon
Email: fewlass@tca.net

UNI-CON 2000
November 10-12 MO
Holiday Inn at I-44 and US Hwy 71, Joplin.
Contact: Changing Hands Book Shoppe
528 Virginia Ave
Joplin, MO 64801.
Website: www.unicon-joplin.com
Featuring: art show, LARP, video room, more.

U CON
November 17-19 MI
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
Contact: U con
P.O. Box 4491
Ann Arbor, MI 48103.
Email: uconinfooo@umich.edu
Website: www.deathstar.org/~ucon

SYNDICON 2000
November 18-19 IN
Holiday Inn Express, Portage.
Contact: Carl Cabanas.
Email: conman1@gte.net
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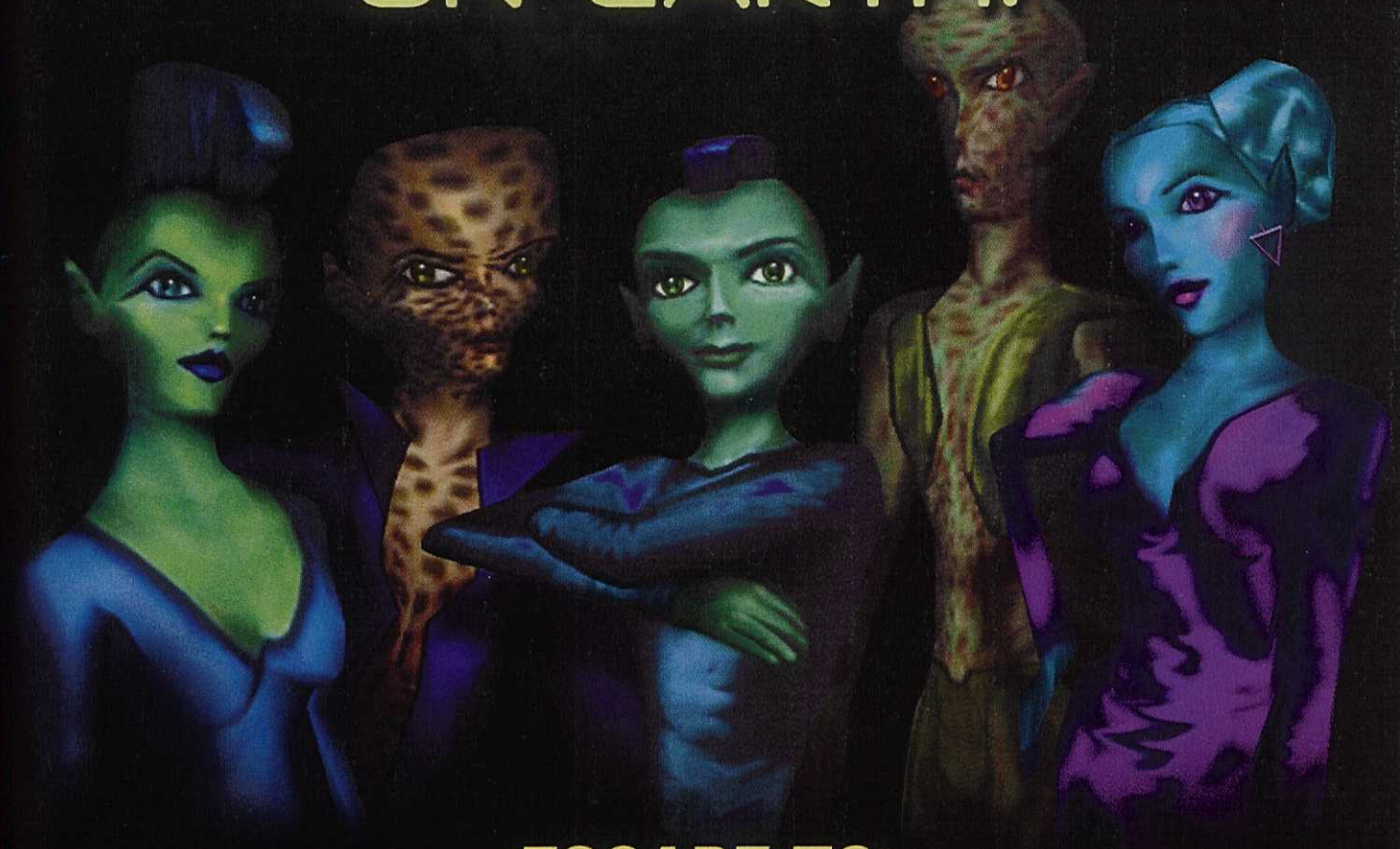

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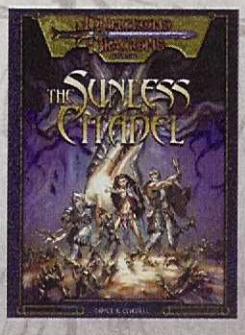

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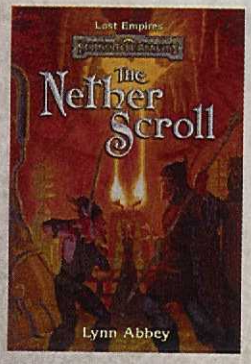

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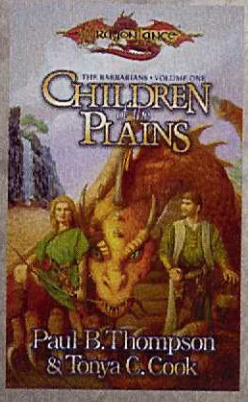

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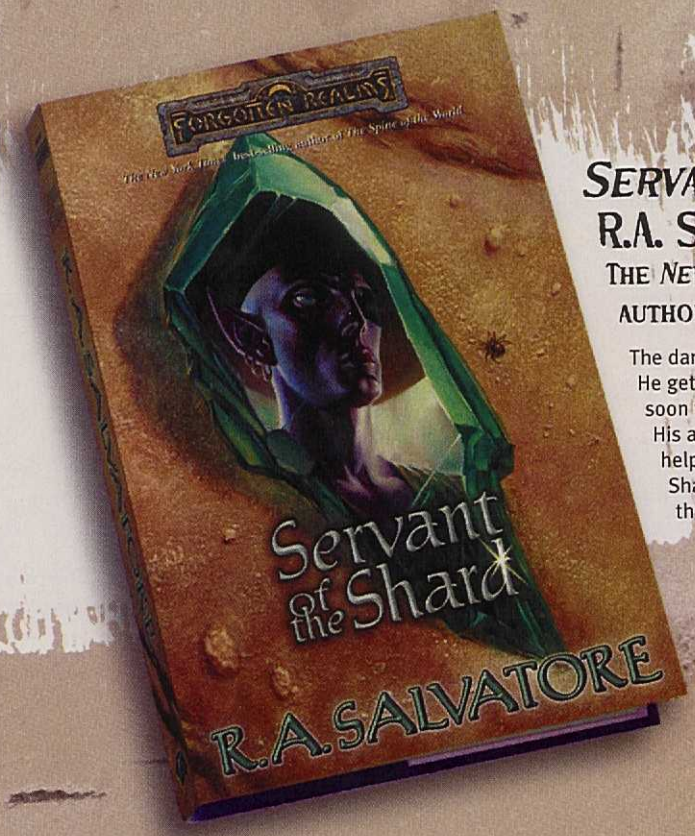

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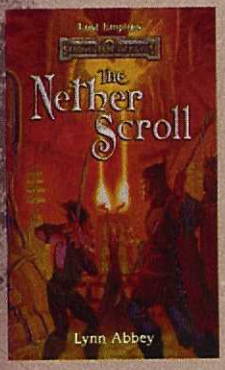

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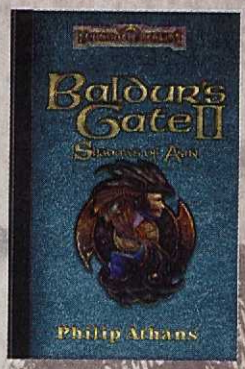

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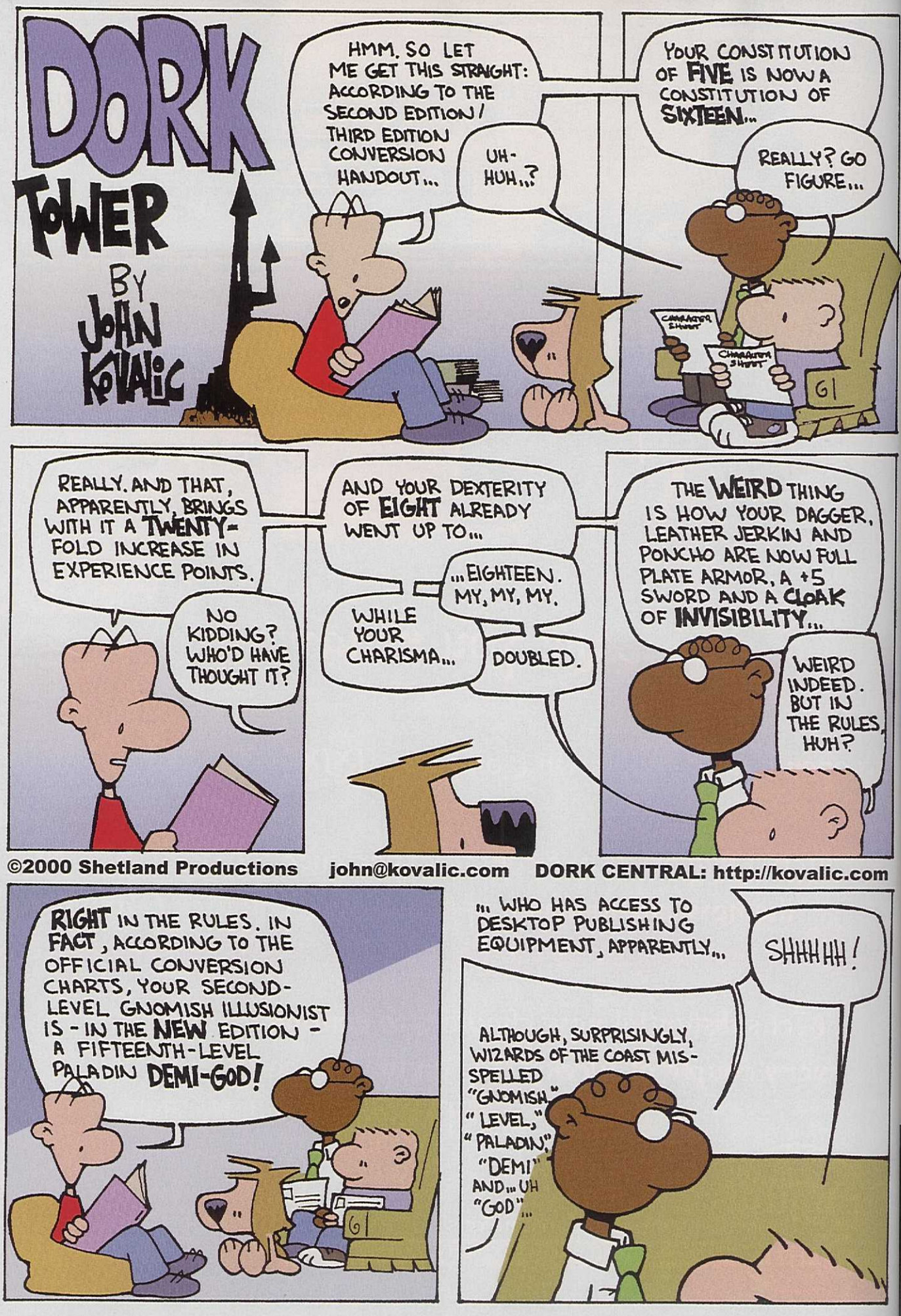
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CHARACTER SHEET
REALLY. AND THAT, APPARENTLY, BRINGS WITH IT A TWENTY-FOLD INCREASE IN EXPERIENCE POINTS.
NO KIDDING? WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT IT?
AND YOUR DEXTERITY OF EIGHT ALREADY WENT UP TO...
...EIGHTEEN. MY, MY, MY.
WHILE YOUR CHARISMA...
DOUBLED.
THE WEIRD THING IS HOW YOUR DAGGER, LEATHER JERKIN AND PONCHO ARE NOW FULL PLATE ARMOR, A +5 SWORD AND A CLOAK OF INVISIBILITY...
WEIRD INDEED. BUT IN THE RULES, HUH?
RIGHT IN THE RULES. IN FACT, ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL CONVERSION CHARTS, YOUR SECOND-LEVEL GNOMISH ILLUSIONIST IS - IN THE NEW EDITION - A FIFTEENTH-LEVEL PALADIN DEMI-GOD!
...WHO HAS ACCESS TO DESKTOP PUBLISHING EQUIPMENT, APPARENTLY...
SHHHHH!
ALTHOUGH, SURPRISINGLY, WIZARDS OF THE COAST MIS-SPELLED "GNOMISH," "LEVEL," "PALADIN," "DEMI" AND... UH "GOD"...

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Unusual Suspects

Fake 'em out by being an elf, then open a stein of whuppass on their scaley hides.

Barbarians, Paladins, and Rangers

by James Wyatt • Illustrated by Ron Spencer

Have you ever played a halfling paladin?

Even if you've played the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game until now, you probably haven't experienced all it has to offer. Earlier editions of the game made a halfling paladin off-limits, and even now there might be some Dungeon Masters out there who simply won't allow it.

Race and class combinations like the halfling paladin or the elf barbarian might seem strange, but with a little thought, they can add worlds of depth and fascination to a campaign. If you're a DM working on building your own campaign world, think hard before you ban some of these more unusual combinations. If you're a player, think about these possibilities when you make your next character—and maybe you can help shape your DM's campaign.

Barbarians

According to the *Player's Handbook*, humans and half-orcs are the most common barbarians, while dwarven barbarians are rare and others are rarer still. However, any race could have certain cultures that are barbaric, perhaps located in out-of-the-way places such as the far north or a deep jungle. Consider these ideas:

DWARVES

- A nation of dwarves akin to the Vikings lives in the bitter North. These dwarves share not only the Viking berserker rage but also a tradition of sailing across the northern seas to raid their neighbors. This nation might be the dwarven homeland, making more civilized dwarves an anomaly (if they exist at all), or it could be simply one dwarven nation among many.
- Dwarves of remote "hill tribes" live far from the great cities on the fringes of human farming villages. These dwarves, in their colorful costumes, come down to the plains to trade with humans on occasion, but for the most part maintain their ancient tribal ways untouched by modern civilization. They war fiercely against each other and, more often, against the even more savage orc tribes (or even the advanced orcish civilization!) of the highlands.
- In the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, there are two wilder offshoots of the dwarven race: the wild dwarves of the southern jungles and the arctic dwarves of the Great Glacier. These dwarves are perfect barbarians. (Both of these subraces

Barbarian Armor

Barbarians are proficient with light and medium armor, but many barbarian peoples do not have the technology to forge metal armor. (In the real world, the use of chainmail was not widespread in Europe until the Crusades.) Some barbarians, therefore, find other materials with which to make armor, including bone, cord, or wood.

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Max Dex.	Armor Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure	Speed (30 ft.)	Speed (20 ft.)	Weight
Bone (light)	20 gp	+3	+4	-3	15%	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 lb.
Cord (light)	8 gp	+2	+4	-2	20%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
Wood (light)	15 gp	+3	+4	-3	15%	30 ft.	20 ft.	20 lb.

Bone: A cloth or leather coat reinforced with strips of bone cut from whatever animals the barbarians use for food. The armor covers the torso but leaves the limbs free for better mobility.

Cord: Fibers of hemp or other natural material woven and knotted into a thick, tough fabric. The armor forms a complete suit, hampering movement somewhat, but offering decent protection without the use of metal or leather. This armor is particularly popular among wild elves, who often avoid curing animal hide.

Wood: Similar to bone armor, but this armor is reinforced with wood strips instead of bone.

are detailed in *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn*, scheduled for release in February 2001.)

ELVES

- Elves are a fallen race. Thousands of years ago, a great elven empire ruled the world. Tall elven cities graced the land, blending naturally and beautifully into the forests. Graceful elven ships sailed the seas, spreading elven culture and conquering other lands. The other races, if they existed yet, were all subservient to the elven empire. But the fall of that great empire was also the fall of the elven race. The great cities and provincial capitals were destroyed and their populace slaughtered. Elves in smaller towns and out-of-the-way places were driven from their homes and cut off from trade and communication. They gradually—over many elven generations—fell into a state of total savagery. Their descendants are barbarians in every sense of the word, ignorant of the ancient glories they possessed before the birth of humanity.

- Elves are a new race, born from the trees as the world's last hope for survival. Dragons rule the world, and their ravages are threatening to destroy the very planet. Huge expanses of land are made into barren wastes in the wake of wars between the wyrms, the deserts are rapidly expanding, and volcanoes erupting. The elves are the firstborn of the humanoid races, created for the purpose of subduing the dragons. Their culture and technology is primitive compared to most D&D games, but it is the best their world has yet produced.

- Elves fill their normal role in the world, but there are wilder offshoots of the elven race. Wild elves might live deep in the remotest forests—temperate woodland, torrid jungle, or frigid taiga. Perhaps aquatic elves (capable of breathing air for long periods and thus possible as a PC race) are fierce and uncivilized compared to their land-dwelling cousins. Maybe the fearsome drow, long ago driven underground for their evil ways, are now a race in decline, forgetful of their more civilized past.

GNOMES

- Hidden in a great swamp, small villages of gnome hunters and gatherers—tough, wiry, and ferocious in battle—live in fear of a warlord's armies. Mounted on giant lizards, the gnome warriors raid the warlord's caravans, then disappear back into the swamp. These gnomes have little patience for the stereotypes of gnomes as ridiculous tinkerers—though they have been known to create ingenious traps to entangle their enemies or destroy the warlord's war machines.

- Deep in the Underdark, an entire race of gnomes—the deep gnomes, or svirfneblin—has been enslaved by the great duergar empire. For centuries, they have toiled in servitude to their evil masters, losing all traces of the great civilization they once boasted. Reduced to a savage state, the barbarian heroes of these deep gnomes fight fiercely to free their people from the yoke of oppression.

HALFLINGS

- A tribe of nomadic halflings rides sleek ponies on the wide plains. Living by a strict code of warrior honor, these halfling barbarians are experts at mounted combat (including archery) and are fierce in battle. They are also incredibly attuned to the natural surroundings of their native plains. Over the years, the gradual encroachment of human settlers onto the plains has forced the halflings closer to the western mountains, where a goblinoid kingdom blocks any further retreat. Caught between the goblinoids and the humans, the halflings are facing drastic changes to their traditional lifestyle. Many turn to a life of adventure, either in the human lands or on the borders of the goblin kingdom. Others gather in the slums of human cities, while some bands have been captured by the goblinoids and sold into slavery.

- The warrior-champions of the halfling god of war, Aivoreen, are gifted by their god with an uncharacteristic battle frenzy. These special halfling barbarians are often multiclassed clerics, with access to the Destruction, Strength, and War domains (favored weapon: battleaxe). They are viewed with a mixture of fear and admiration by other halflings, and often turn to an adventuring life to avoid the disapproving stares of Yondalla's staid clerics.

- The feral halflings of the Dark Sun campaign setting would also make excellent barbarians. These halflings live in villages in the rainforests on the outskirts of the civilized world, viewing all other races with suspicion, distrust, and hunger.

HALF-ORCS

Barbarian is the favored class for half-orc characters. Half-orc barbarians, according to the *Player's Handbook*, are assumed to have lived among orcs before abandoning that part of their mixed heritage, but consider these alternatives:

- Centuries in the past, there was a great deal of interbreeding between orcs and certain humans. (Perhaps an evil human kingdom had a close alliance with an orc tribe, or maybe the orcs once lived as equals, noble and good, beside their human counterparts.) Something changed (the alliance disintegrated, or the orcs fell from grace), and the multitude of half-orcs were driven out of both societies. Living as a society of their own on land neither parent race wanted (deep underground, in a great swamp, or within an ancient forest), the half-orcs became a distinct race, culturally separate from both orcs and humans. These half-orcs, living in inhospitable terrain, still share their orcish side's strength and hardiness, and produce great barbarian adventurers.

- A tribe of human barbarians could remain on good terms with its orcish neighbors, producing a number of half-orc children. These children might be the natural leaders of their human tribes, as they excel in the qualities the human barbarians admire. Others, feeling the difference between themselves and their human kin, might flee into the wider world in search of a better life.

Paladins

Traditionally limited to humans, paladinhood is appropriate for any race or culture that has a powerful lawful good church with a militaristic ideal. Dwarves are generally lawful good, and halflings and gnomes (as well as humans) often share that alignment. Ponder these possibilities:

DWARVES

- Dwarves have a military bent that makes them excellent paladin candidates. Perhaps a certain dwarven clan traditionally provides paladins for the defense of the stronghold, so that loyalty to clan and loyalty to the paladin's call are no longer in conflict. This clan also serves as an internal watchdog, ensuring that the dwarves themselves never stray too far from the path of law and good in its vigilance against the evil outside.

- A certain faction within a major dwarven stronghold is promoting a religious revival, calling the dwarves to put faith in their gods (or one god in particular) above the divisive allegiances of race and clan. Members of this revivalist movement are pious and devout to the extreme, giving up their family names and voluntarily adopting a harshly ascetic lifestyle. Many members, flushed with the enthusiasm of conversion, take up the mantle of the clerics or paladins, seeking concrete and obvious external ways of living out their new-found faith. These dwarven paladins might epitomize the stereotype of the overzealous paladin, but their devotion to law and goodness, and their fierce hatred of evil, cannot be denied.

CENTURIES IN THE PAST, THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF INTERBREEDING BETWEEN ORCS AND CERTAIN HUMANS . . .

ELVES

- The elven homeland is under siege, and all of the creatures living in it must unite to drive off an ancient enemy. The unicorns of the wood have chosen a select number of elven warriors, all female, to carry into battle. The unicorns choose only elves with the purest hearts, touching them with their horns to open their ears to hear the call to paladinhood. The elves must prove themselves worthy, but by the time they reach 5th level as paladins, they are ready to ride their unicorns into battle against the evil forces—both within the forest and without. These elven paladins are a terror to their foes and an inspiration to all who fight in defense of the wood.

- A lawful good elven demigod is devoted to bringing the drow back into the fold of the good elven races. His champions are tireless crusaders: elven paladins who exhort the drow to change their ways but are empowered to smite those unrepentant dark elves who continue to serve gods of evil. As comfortable in the lightless caverns of the Underdark as in their native forests, these paladins have been known to ride giant lizards instead of warhorses.

GNOMES

- Decades of grueling warfare against a neighboring kobold tribe, goblinoid kingdom, or evil theocracy has made the gnomes a grim and war-hardened race. Their war has placed them firmly on the side of law and good, however, and the toughest, most idealistic, and (some would say) most fanatical of their soldiery are paladins.

- The race of deep gnomes, or svirfneblin, might produce many gnomish champions of law and good as they struggle to survive in the Underdark, beset by such foes as drow, duergar, and mind flayers.

HALFLINGS

- The halfling race originated in the Deeping Valley, far to the west. Two centuries ago, a conquering evil army swept through the valley, decimating the peaceful halflings and occupying their land. These oppressors forbade any expression of the halflings' native religion, on penalty of death. Meeting in secret shrines far underground or deep in the forests at the edge of the valley, the lawful good church of the halflings ordained holy warriors—paladins—to fight these enemies. Clad in light armor (to maximize stealth) and wielding slings and shortbows (for hit-and-run tactics), these halfling paladins are not the stereotypical knights in shining armor, but they are no less dedicated to the paladin's code. Some might even have acquired a few levels as rogues before taking

Alternative Paladin Mounts

Most of the common nonhuman races are not particularly fond of riding horses or even ponies. Nonhuman paladins might attract a different sort of mount, rather than a warhorse. At the DM's option, a paladin might be required to rise higher than 5th level before attracting a special mount like these, particularly if the mount can fly or has other special abilities.

Dwarves: Dire wolf, dire boar, dire wolverine, giant lizard.
Elves: Unicorn, griffon, giant owl, dire weasel.
Gnomes: Dire badger, riding dog, large ram (use bison statistics), warpony.
Halflings: Riding dog, leopard, warpony.
Half-orcs: Rhinoceros, brown bear, elephant.

When you're a pint-sized (read: gnome) paladin of Pelor you can sneak into places that aren't expecting any divine retribution.

up the call to paladinhood. Many of these knights wander the lands outside their home valley, hoping to gain experience and rally support for their cause, but all will someday return to drive the evil armies from the valley.

- The halflings of an archipelago are shipbuilders and sailors of the highest caliber, but their islands are plagued by pirates. An order of oceangoing paladins called Seaguards are charged with the defense of the archipelago, reporting to the halfling king and also to their high priest.

HALF-ORCS

- Some half-orcs are so driven to prove themselves in the face of wide spread prejudice and hatred that they find themselves drawn to the life of a paladin. These characters are usually loners, wandering the countryside in their war against evil, usually asking and receiving no thanks for the work they do, but somehow vindicated in their own hearts.

- Consider the earlier example (under "Barbarians") of a nation of half-orcs formed of outcasts and refugees. Instead of living as barbarians in inhospitable terrain, these half-orcs might have found a "promised land" of their own, where they could thrive and prosper as a civilized nation. Perhaps these half-orcs are threatened by an evil neighbor, or perhaps they still strive against the evil orcs and humans who cast them out years ago. In either case, paladins might arise among these half-orcs and set out to prove their worth, championing their cause against the evil forces who would exterminate them.

Rangers

Members of virtually any race can be rangers, though dwarven and halfling rangers are rare. Reflect on these variations:

DWARVES

The *Player's Handbook* suggests the possibility of dwarf rangers, called "cavers," who operate underground rather than in the wilderness. For a more traditional ranger, consider the following options:

- A dwarven stronghold was overrun in a massive invasion (of drow, mind flayers, duergar, or orcs) centuries ago. The remnants of this stronghold fled—not into new caverns, but out onto the surface, where they adapted to a new way of life, cut off from their ancestral halls. While they are accustomed now to life in wilderness settings and adept at wilderness lore, these dwarves dream of one day reclaiming the ancient stronghold from its new inhabitants. Many dwarven rangers come from this remnant, and their first favored enemy is always the race that destroyed their home.

- A dwarven stronghold, carved into a mountain that rises high above a vast swamp, is under constant siege by the lizardfolk who dwell in the swamp. Not content to remain in the stronghold waiting for the next lizardfolk offensive, some of the dwarven warriors have taken the battle to the swamp, learning the ways of the alien terrain and the habits of their traditional foes. These dwarven rangers choose lizardfolk as their first favored enemy.

ELVES

- In a world where orcs are the dominant species, a civilized (but still evil) people dwelling in decadent cities surrounded by heavy stone walls, the elves still live in their wild forests. Only the elves (and perhaps half-elves and tallfellow halflings) retain the connection to the natural world required to be rangers.

- Rather than a standing army of fighters and warriors, the elven nations maintain only a small military force made up of guerilla units of rangers. These rangers are skilled at fighting in the trees, peppering their foes with arrows before disappearing again into the forest. Elves from this nation would rarely take the fighter class, and elven paladins and barbarians would be virtually unknown, with the ranger class representing the ultimate archetype of the elven soldier.

Favorite Two-Weapon Combinations

One of the greatest benefits of the ranger class is the ability to fight with two weapons with a reduced penalty. Many rangers (particularly human rangers) fight with a longsword in one hand and a shortsword in the other. Nonhuman rangers often choose more distinctive weapon combinations. Note that all these combinations allow the ranger the least penalty (-2 to both attacks) because the off-hand weapon is light. A ranger willing to accept a larger penalty can use a larger weapon in his off hand.

Dwarves: Battleaxe and handaxe, heavy pick and light pick, warhammer and light hammer, dwarven waraxe (exotic weapon) and handaxe.
Elves: Longsword and shortsword, longsword and dagger, scimitar and sickle.
Gnomes: Handaxe and dagger, light hammer and dagger, shortsword and dagger.
Halflings: Shortsword and dagger, sickle and kukri (exotic weapon), shortsword and spiked gauntlet.
Half-orcs: Bastard sword (exotic weapon) and handaxe, bastard sword and shortsword, battleaxe and shortsword.

You'll make a good ranger as a halfling because you're already so close to the ground.

GNOMES

- Several gnome tribes have been conquered and enslaved by the duergar, taken from their traditional homes in the deep Underdark. A gnome ranger might be an escaped slave, dedicated to liberating his people and destroying the evil dwarves. Similar to a dwarven caver, such a gnome would be more adept in underground settings than in the wilderness.

- A gnome village was torn asunder when it was infiltrated by a family of gnome werebadgers (gnomes who can assume the form of dire badgers). While the lycanthropes were eventually smoked out and driven off, a handful of gnomes from the village—particularly those who lost close friends or family members to the werebeasts' predations—have sworn revenge on all lycanthropes. Venturing out from their shattered village into the surrounding lands, these gnome rangers are suspicious of all strangers, fearing that a bestial visage lies behind every smiling face. Shapechangers are their natural favored enemy, but as they continue their hunt (and advance in level) they might extend their hatred to other monsters that hide in innocent guise—certain undead, evil outsiders, or even dragons.

HALFLINGS

- In a world where demonic invaders have overrun the halfling lands (see "Paladins," above), the halflings might not be able to conduct any structured military training. Instead of paladins, then, the halfling champions are rangers, dedicated to the extermination of the demons, with evil outsiders as their favored enemy.

- Some halfling clans are always on the move, traveling between the settlements of other races like gypsies. They might set up camp in one place for weeks or even months, trading with the natives, but they always move on. Among the most respected individuals in such bands are the Trailfinders, halfling rangers who are expert trackers and hunters on whom the survival of the clan often depends. When the Trailfinders leave their clans, for some reason they never settle down—these halflings find a sedentary life impossible to contemplate. A life of adventure is a natural replacement for the wandering life to which these hardy folk are accustomed.

HALF-ORCS

- Some half-orc rangers are driven by their hatred for a certain species. In a few cases, these rangers direct their hatred at the humans and orcs who have shunned them and made them outcasts. These rangers are often evil, or at least neutral, unless the humans they particularly oppose are evil. Other half-orc rangers, naturally distrustful of magic, focus their energy against magical creatures, including constructs, dragons, elementals, fey, magical beasts, outsiders, or undead.

- A surprisingly large number of half-orcs traces its ancestry back to one man: a ranger named Thorikos Orc-friend. Thorikos, a chaotic neutral ranger, found many points of common interest with an orc tribe that lived near his forest. He became friends with the tribe's chieftain and eventually married the chieftain's daughter. His influence mellowed the orcs somewhat, though he himself was a rough and savage man. He and his orc wife had many children, and the half-orcs descended from him boast with pride of their parentage. Many, hoping to follow in their ancestor's footsteps, seek out the path of the ranger.

Creating a unique and interesting campaign has a lot to do with defining what sets it apart from the generic standard. Giving the classes—or class and race combinations—an unusual twist in a D&D campaign can go a long way toward creating a rich campaign world with a flavor all its own.

PC Portraits

Illustrated by Stephen F. Schwartz

"Fighters are a great group to illustrate," says artist Stephen Schwartz. "In fact, I felt a little confined with only fourteen images, and only head and shoulders at that. I really enjoy dreaming up the wild armor and weapons of the new D&D game. I tried to show all the professionals from the various races, as well as some new blood just starting to test their courage and the temper of their weapons. I like the grittier, grimmer look the new D&D has, and look forward to doing more of it."

How To Design a Feat

by Jonathan Tweet and Sean K Reynolds

A feat is a special feature that either gives your character a new capability or improves one he or she already has.
- Player's Handbook

This simple statement opens up a world of opportunities for DMs and players. Most want to enhance characters in their shared world, and most consider creating new feats the way to make their gaming experience fit their conceptions of the characters and world. However, creating a new feat requires careful study of the rules, existing feats, and the purpose of feats. When designing a feat, you must consider what you want the feat to do, the relative power of the feat, and the effects of the feat on the game. Note that during this process, we'll show that certain feats, as published in the *Player's Handbook*, are breaking some of these rules.

What Does It Do?

Feats give you an ability you didn't have before (such as Power Attack), give a bonus where none existed (Mobility), or reduce a penalty (Improved Bull Rush). Determine which is most appropriate for your feat, then consider the following:

- **Efficiency:** Do you need a feat for this, or can it already be done with the existing rules? Squeeze as much as possible from the rules you have before you make a new rule.
- **Minimalism:** Start with the minimal award possible. You can always increase it later in the design process. In most cases, the minimum is a +1 or -1 on a d20 roll.
- **Offense:** An offensive feat is more fun than a defensive feat. When you attack, you are in control and can decide to use the feat. When you are defending, you might not have the choice of using your feat (if you are held, attacked by an invisible opponent, or defending against multiple attackers for example).
- **Duplication:** Is your feat similar to another feat? If so, consider using the other feat, or make your feat unique. A feat that gives a +3 bonus to Listen checks and a +1 bonus to Spot checks is almost exactly like Alertness; it is better to leave Alertness as an option and make the feat do something else. We call this rule, "Things should be the same, or they should be different."

How Powerful Is It?

- **Multiplicity:** It's better to give a bonus that a character will be happy with than give a smaller bonus that characters can take multiple times. The saving throw feats (Great Fortitude and so on) were originally only +1 but could be selected multiple times.
- **Probability:** An extra attack is more powerful than an attack bonus, which

is more powerful than a damage bonus. Extra attacks can be used every round, but a damage bonus can only be used if you roll high enough to hit.

- **Minmaxing:** Design the feat based on the optimal character (minmaxed), not the average character. A feat designed for an average character can break the system when used by a minmaxed character.
- **Specificity:** Just because a feat is more specific does not mean it is better. For example, Skill Focus gives you +2 on one skill of your choice; Alertness gives you +2 on two skills, but they have to be Listen and Spot. Any character considering Skill Focus (Listen) would be foolish to take that instead of Alertness because Alertness is clearly better. (You get the +2 on the skill you want and +2 on another skill.)
- **Evaluation:** One way to judge the power level of a feat is to compare it to similar feats, rating each criteria for the feat with a +, 0, or −. A feat that has too many positives compared to negatives should be adjusted. Remember that the primary cost of a feat is the fact that taking it means a character isn't taking a different feat.
- **Balance:** The idea of perfectly balancing feats is an illusion. Some feats are clearly better than others (Alertness vs. Skill Focus), and comparing the strength of combat feats against non-combat feats is very difficult (Power Attack vs. Scribe Scroll). Once you have done your best to weed out any obvious dangers, the best test for a feat is actual play over several sessions.
- **Revision:** It is perfectly acceptable to change your mind about a feat you created, even if characters are already using the feat. If you need to decrease the power of a custom feat and your players feel that the feat no longer fits their character concept or is not powerful enough for their tastes, it's only fair to allow them to select an alternate feat to replace it.

How Does It Affect The Game?

- **Prerequisites:** The fewer prerequisites the better, because a feat is more fun if more people are playing with it. Similarly, it is better to have a trait be a valuable addition to a feat than required to use a feat. A feat with a Strength 15+ requirement is less fun than one without a Strength requirement, even though someone with a higher Strength might benefit more. It's fun to have a character with a Dexterity of 8 able to select Lightning Reflexes and justify the saving throw bonus as being so clumsy that the character often falls out of harm's

Just because a feat is more specific does not mean it is better.

What Shouldn't You Ever Do With Feats?

- **Don't give a character a class-exclusive ability**, such as a monk's Slow Fall, arcane or divine spellcasting, or the bard's and rogue's access to the Use Magic Device skill. These abilities can be gained by multiclassing, and if a character wants those abilities, the character should multiclass to get them (and pay the consequences for it).
- **Don't make a particular class, or a certain number of levels in a class, be a prerequisite for a feat.** If a character's class and level actually represent something in the game world, then that something should be the prerequisite for the feat. If it doesn't represent something in the game world, it can't be a prerequisite for a feat. Being a fighter means that you have focused on learning how to fight, giving you more skill than most characters of the same level. Having a feat that requires you to be a good fighter has meaning, having a feat that requires you to be a 4th-level fighter does not, because all that being a 4th-level fighter means is you have a certain amount of fighting skill—just like any other character with a +4 base attack bonus. Such a feat should instead have a minimum base attack bonus as a prerequisite. Note that according to this rule, Weapon Specialization should just have a "Base attack bonus +4 or higher" prerequisite, Extra Turning should actually have "turn undead" as a prerequisite, and Spell Mastery should have "arcane spellcaster that prepares spells" as its prerequisite (for while only the wizard is such a spellcaster in the *Player's Handbook*, you might create a prestige class that uses similar spellcasting rules).
- **Don't break the game's implicit rules.** For example, many precision-based abilities have a 30-foot limit (see sneak attack, Animal Empathy, Read Lips, Point Blank Shot, and so on). Extending this range begins to skew the fundamental rules that the game uses to model the world and sets a precedent for other modifications (changing a 5-foot step to a 10-foot step, for example).
- **Don't slow down the game.** Feats that involve complex decision-making or dice rolling every round detract from the fun of playing because you spend time on those things instead of playing. They also cause you to spend a greater amount of time dealing with that player, to the detriment of other players.
- **Don't reward a low ability score.** If low ability scores give you advantages that you can't have with high ability scores, it reduces the benefit of having high ability scores. The Too Ugly To Die feat, which allowed you to stay conscious at negative hit points if your Charisma was 6 or less, was cut from the *Player's Handbook* for this reason.
- **Don't use silly names, contemporary names, or names that break the "fourth wall" for the characters.** Imagine the character saying the name of the feat; if it's jarring, it's probably inappropriate. The feats Sunder, Precise Shot, Spring Attack, and Mounted Archery were changed from Property Damage, Got Your Back Charlie, Sucks To Be You, and Born a Mongol for this reason.

Sample Abilities Granted By Feats

- **attack bonuses** (Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus)
- **damage bonuses** (Power Attack, Point Blank Shot)
- **save bonuses** (Great Fortitude, Iron Will)
- **initiative bonuses** (Improved Initiative)
- **skill bonuses** (Alertness, Skill Focus)
- **remove penalty** (Armor Proficiency (light), Simple Weapon Proficiency)
- **hit point bonuses** (Toughness)
- **negate attacks of opportunity for actions you take** (Quicken Spell, Sunder)
- **Armor Class bonus** (Dodge, Mobility)
- **increase maneuverability** (Ride-By Attack, Spring Attack)
- **enhance character abilities** (Extra Turning, Spell Mastery)
- **on/off feats** (Scribe Scroll, Stunning Fist)
- **affect magic abilities** (Spell Focus, Enlarge Spell)

way (sometimes called the "Jar-Jar effect"). Note that if you have an ability score as a prerequisite, it should always be an odd number to encourage characters to develop their scores beyond the even-numbered "break points" where the modifier changes.

- **Compensation:** A feat that improves a weak feature is better than one that improves a strong feature because it widens the range of good character choices. The Toughness feat is a good feat because it allows an elf wizard with an 8 Constitution to be able to take a dagger hit without dropping. If Toughness were available only to characters of a certain level or minimum Constitution score, it would not be as useful.
- **Realism:** Take a look at what the feat allows a character to do in a game. Is the feat realistic and possible without the supernatural? If not (for example, a feat that allows you to run 30 feet up the side of a building), it shouldn't be a feat. In a game with spells and fire-breathing dragons, things that anyone can do (and anyone can choose feats) should hold to what's possible in the real world (even if it would take a well-trained specialist to do it).
- **Mechanics:** A feat should be defined with mechanics, not with subjective comparisons or DM arbitration. All parties involved need to be 100% sure how a feat works in every situation, and requiring you to interpret each situation for the purpose of a feat slows down the game, makes the game more complex, and makes the feat less fun to use. For example, consider a Dirty Fighting feat that lets you kick sand in an opponent's face as a move-equivalent action (giving that target a -1 penalty on attacks for 1 round). Can this feat be used on a carrion crawler or a giant ant? Insect eyes might be immune. Can you use it on a giant? It might be too tall for the sand to reach. Can you use it on a grimlock? It has eyes but doesn't use them. Can you use it on a zombie? It doesn't feel pain.
- **Category:** If the feat is appropriate for the fighter bonus feat list, a metamagic feat, or an item creation feat, be sure to list it as such so that appropriate classes can benefit from their special abilities.
- **Weirdness:** Prepare for the bizarre. Don't create a feat with "sword" in mind when it's possible that the feat could be used by biting dragons, ogres with clubs, and wizards with touch spells. Examine the consequences of how the feat might be used. If you were a player, how would you use this feat against your DM's minions?
- **Classes:** A feat should be relatively even across all classes (is it noticeably better for characters of a certain class?), levels (does it become too weak or too powerful at middle and high levels?), and reasonable with the most abusive combination of abilities. A feat that allows you to use your unarmed attack bonus with any weapon is a great benefit to monks and useless to other classes. A feat that increases your base attack bonus by +1 is a much greater benefit to characters with a base attack bonus of +5, +10, or +15 because they would get an extra attack each round. A feat that lets you subtract your Strength bonus from your attack roll and add it to your damage becomes extremely dangerous for a 5th-level fighter character with 20 Strength and Power Attack (+0 to attack, +15 damage!).

Conclusion: Learn The Rules

Designing feats requires a strong knowledge of how the D&D rules fit together. Casual implementation of game rules while ignoring these guidelines can result in characters that are too weak or more powerful than other characters in the group. Fortunately, you always have the option of readjusting a feat after it has been created. If you keep in mind the guidelines and use the checklist when your feat design is finished, you'll add unique flavor to your D&D campaign without fear of unbalancing your game. This saves you a lot of time and trouble down the road.

Example Creation of a Feat #1

For your campaign world, you're creating an order of archers that train to fire many shots with extreme accuracy. You decide to make a new feat, Improved Rapid Shot, that reduces or negates the penalty from Rapid Shot (-2).

- **Efficiency:** The rules already allow a character to have multiple accurate shots just by gaining levels. However, you justify creating the feat because most of the archers of this order are going to be low-level NPCs, and you want them to be an effective threat against the orc barbarians that are common in the area.
- **Minimalism:** You start with the smallest change, reducing the -2 penalty to a -1.
- **Multiplicity:** You would rather the characters choose this feat once and be happy with it than feel they have to take it twice to make it truly effective, so you increase the feat's effect so that it fully cancels the penalty. It also makes the bookkeeping convenient for the players (having no penalty is easier to remember than having a penalty).
- **Probability:** This feat isn't as powerful as one that would simply let the archer get another attack, but it suits the flavor of what you're looking for, so you leave it the way it is.
- **Minmaxing:** A 1st-level human fighter could choose Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, and Improved Rapid shot, getting two missile attacks per round with no penalty. You think that's a little much at 1st-level, especially because you want the feat to reflect some training beyond the basic fighter training. You think about this while considering the other points of design.
- **Evaluation:** You compare this feat to the Ambidexterity/Two Weapon

Fighting feat combination. The latter reduces the attack penalty from -6/-10 to -4/-4, while your new feat combo reduces the penalty from -2/-2 to +0/+0. Just by comparing numbers, this new pair is not more powerful than the other pair (a net effect of +4 compared to +8).

- **Prerequisites:** Rapid Shot already has a Dexterity prerequisite, so you don't need to add another one. The training requirement mentioned earlier makes you think that raw recruits wouldn't be able to do this, so you set the prerequisites for this feat to Rapid Shot (of course) and base attack bonus +2 or higher. This allows a 2nd-level fighter of any race to get the feat (if it was on the fighter's bonus feat list) if he chose Point Blank Shot and Rapid Shot at 1st-level.
- **Realism:** Could a fighter with some training fire two arrows accurately in a period of 6 seconds? Certainly.
- **Category:** This feat is obviously a suitable feat for fighters, and you want a fighter to be able to get it at 2nd-level, so you note that it is on the fighter's bonus feat list. Also, the feat doesn't specify that this ability was for bows only, but if monsters with ranged weapons—even nonstandard ranged weapons, like a manticore's tail spikes—learned this feat, it wouldn't harm the game.
- **Classes:** The low base attack bonus requirement means the fighting classes can get it earlier than others, but it's still available to all classes and doesn't give any particular class an advantage with all other factors equal. A quick look over the "What Shouldn't You Ever Do with Feats" sidebar shows that you're in the clear, so the feat is done and ready for play. If the feat proves too powerful, you can always try knocking it back down to -1 on each attack, or even negating the penalty on only the first attack. The final version of the feat is:

Improved Rapid Shot [General]
You are an expert at firing weapons with exceptional speed.
Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, base attack bonus +2 or higher
Benefit: When using the Rapid Shot feat, you can ignore the -2 attack penalty on all of your ranged attacks.

Example Creation of a Feat #2

After looking at *delayed blast fireball,* you want to open up the delaying option for other spells, and the best way to do that is with a new meta-magic feat. Delay Spell lets you cast a spell and delay the actual effects for several rounds.

- **Efficiency:** No rule exists for this, although a parallel exists between *fireball* and *delayed blast fireball.* The latter is four levels higher, so you set the initial adjustment for the delayed spell to four levels higher than the original, and use the 1-5 round variable from *delayed blast fireball* for the feat.
- **Balance:** Again using the existing spells as a comparison, a normal *fireball* has a maximum of 10d6 damage, while a *delayed blast fireball* uses d8s for damage, has no damage cap, and a higher DC. A delayed *fireball* still has the 10d6 damage cap and the same DC as a regular *fireball.* Compared to the existing spell, a feat-enhanced spell falls short on two counts. You decide to make the feat a three-level jump instead of a four-level jump, which gives sorcerers and wizards a reason to actually learn *delayed blast fireball* (because it's better at a higher cost than just using the feat).
- **Mechanics:** The functioning of the feat needs to be described, and you can use *delayed blast fireball* as a baseline.
- **Category:** Obviously, this is a meta-magic feat and should be classified as such, so a wizard can pick it up with one of her bonus feats.
- **Weirdness:** While the feat's effects are obvious for direct spells like *fireball*, a delayed *magic missile* is less certain. If one of the targets of a delayed *magic missile* moves more than 15 feet away from the other targets, what happens? If you cast a *ray of enfeeblement* and the target moves before the spell is activated, does it still strike that target or does it hit whoever occupies that square? These questions require too much DM arbitration, slowing down the game (which is on the Don'ts sidebar list). These problems can be avoided by limiting which spells the feat effects.

Area spells are straightforward—the spell's area is precisely defined when cast, and other creatures moving into or out of it won't alter the effects (functioning exactly like *delayed blast fireball*). Personal spells are similarly easy, as you are always in range of yourself. (You could delay a healing spell for yourself, activating it automatically 3 rounds into combat, or an *invisibility* spell on yourself so that it activates the round after you blast an enemy with a *Melf's acid arrow.*) Touch spells allow you to hold a charge until you specify exactly what target is to be affected—by touching the target—and thereafter the spell effect waits to be activated on that target (allowing you to delay a *harm* spell on an enemy fighter whom you know is about to be cured by a rival cleric).

A feat that improves a weak feature is better than one that improves a strong one.

To avoid headaches later, you decide to limit the feat to these kinds of spells. The final version of the feat is:

Delay Spell [Metamagic]
You can cast a spell that triggers at a set duration after casting.
Benefit: A delayed spell doesn't activate until 1-5 rounds after you finish casting it. You determine the delay when casting the spell, and it cannot be changed once set. The spell activates on your turn on the round you designate. Only area, personal, and touch spells can be affected by this feat. Any decisions you would make about the spell (including attack rolls, designating targets, or determining or shaping an area) are decided when the spell is cast, while any effects resolved by those affected by the spell (including saving throws) are decided when the spell triggers. A delayed spell can be dispelled normally during the delay, and can be detected normally in the area or on the target with spells such as *detect magic.* A delayed spell uses up a spell slot three levels higher than the spell's actual level.

The Right Tool for the Job

More Exotic Weapons for the D&D Game

by Andy Collins • illustrated by Kennon James & David Day

With practiced ease, Vexander drew his elven thinblade and leveled it at the half-orc mercenary. With his agility and skill, he knew that the rapierlike weapon could slice the thug to ribbons in a matter of moments. His smile of confidence turned to a frown, however, when the brutal warrior facing him unsheathed a great curved scimitar nearly the size of Vexander himself and held it above his head. "Oh, dear," Vexander thought. "I do so hate a fair fight."

If your characters are tired of longswords, battleaxes, and polearms, or if you need a new surprise to spring on your players, an exotic weapon can fit the bill.

Exotic weapons take many forms. Some come from distant lands or foreign cultures, while others are designed to take advantage of a specific race's aptitudes, and still others fit a unique or unusual niche in combat situations.

Regardless of their nature, each of the weapons listed below requires the character to select the Exotic Weapon Proficiency feat to become proficient in its use. As stated in the feat's description, the character chooses a specific exotic weapon when she selects the feat; without the appropriate feat, the PC suffers a -4 penalty on attack rolls when using an exotic weapon.

Blowgun or Halfling Blowgun

The blowgun is most often used by primitive tribes to deliver poison to an unfortunate target.

This weapon requires two hands to use. Loading a blowgun is a move-equivalent action that provokes attacks of opportunity.

The blowgun has a maximum range of five range increments. The halfling blowgun is for Small users.

Bolas

A bolas is a set of three weighted balls connected by leather cords. To attack, you whirl the bolas in a circle over your head and then fling it at a target. The bolas connect with your opponent with a successful ranged touch attack: Disregard any armor, shield, or natural armor bonus of the target.

A character struck by bolas must make a Reflex save (with a DC equal to the attack roll of the bolas's wielder). If the saving throw fails, the target takes subdual damage and is considered pinned. (See "Grapple" in Chapter 8: Combat of the *Player's Handbook* for more information.) The bolas can pin only a Tiny, Small, or Medium-size target.

Exotic Weapons - Melee

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
TINY						
Sai	10 gp	1d4	x2	10	½ lb.	Bludgeoning
Tortoise blade, gnome	20 gp	1d4	19-20/x2	—	1 lb.	Piercing
SMALL						
Buckler-axe, dwarf	30 gp	1d6	x3	—	6 lb.	Slashing
Crescent knife	20 gp	1d3	x2	—	1 lb.	Slashing
MEDIUM-SIZE						
Lajatang, halfling	80 gp	1d6/1d6	x2	—	3 lb.	Slashing
Scourge	20 gp	1d3	x2	—	2 lb.	Slashing
Thinblade, elven	100 gp	1d8	18-20/x2	—	3 lb.	Piercing
LARGE						
Crusher, orc	60 gp	1d8	x2	—	15 lb.	Bludgeoning
Gythka	100 gp	1d8/1d8	x2	—	12 lb.	Slashing
Lajatang	90 gp	1d8/1d8	x2	—	7 lb.	Slashing
Mancatcher	30 gp	1d4*	x2	—	8 lb.	Bludgeoning
Scimitar, great	50 gp	2d6	18-20/x2	—	16 lb.	Slashing

MELEE

Exotic Weapons - Ranged

Weapon	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
TINY						
Skiprock, halfling	4 gp	1d3	x2	10	¼ lb.	Bludgeoning
SMALL						
Bolas	10 gp	1d6*	x2	10	3 lb.	Bludgeoning
Bolas, barbed	20 gp	1d6	x2	10	4 lb.	Piercing
Boomerang	20 gp	1d4*	x2	20	2 lb.	Bludgeoning
Chatkcha	40 gp	1d6	x2	20	½ lb.	Slashing
MEDIUM-SIZE						
Blowgun, halfling	15 gp	1d2	x2	10	1 lb.	Piercing
Darts (10)	1 gp	—	—	—	½ lb.	—
LARGE						
Blowgun	20 gp	1d3	x2	10	2 lb.	Piercing
Darts (10)	1 gp	—	—	—	½ lb.	—

**The weapon deals subdual damage rather than normal damage.*

RANGED

To escape the bolas, the pinned character must either break out (Strength check, DC 20), wriggle free (Escape Artist check, DC 20), or cut (or be cut) loose (5 hp and only slashing weapons do damage).

Regardless of the method, escaping is a full-round action. (Remember that a target can use the take 10 or take 20 action to escape if the situation allows.)

If the saving throw succeeds, the target suffers normal damage but is not pinned.

Bolas, Barbed

The barbed bolas is similar to a normal bolas, except that its weighted balls are studded with hooked barbs.

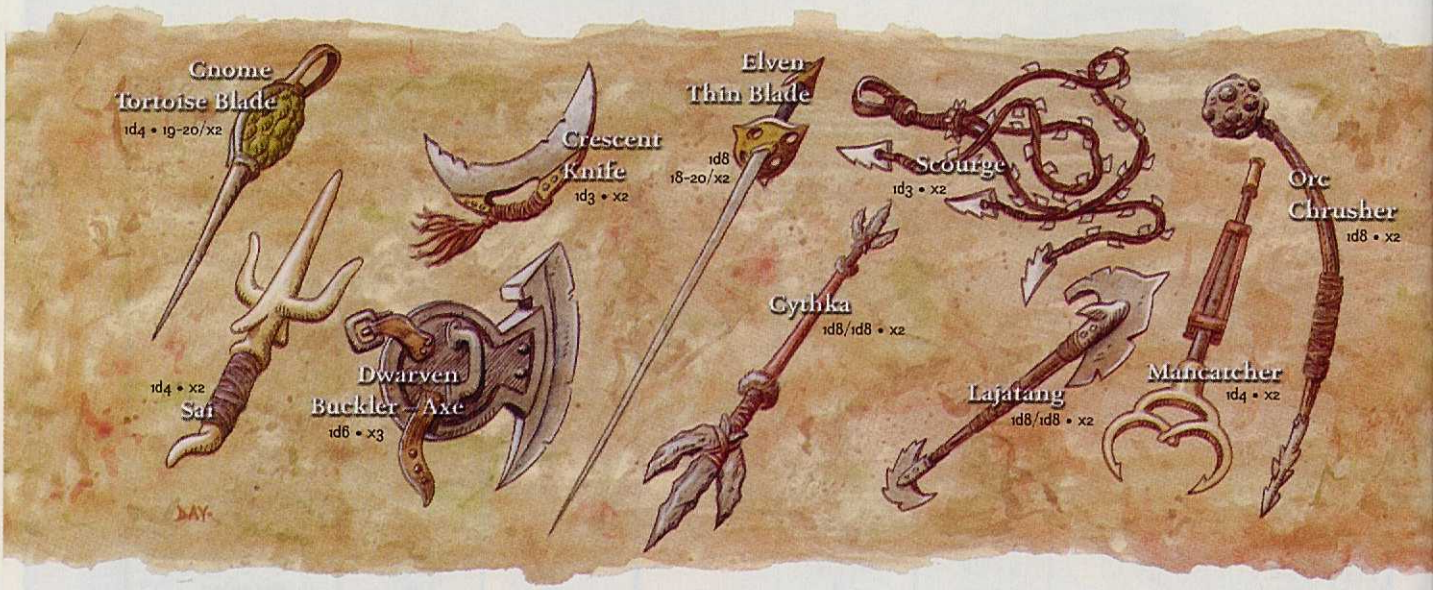
The barbed bolas functions identically to the bolas except that its damage is not subdual damage. In addition, on any failed attempt to break or wriggle free, the grappled character takes an additional 1d4 points of damage.

Boomerang

The boomerang is a curved throwing stick that will return to its thrower on a miss. To catch a returning boomerang, the character must make an attack roll (as if he were throwing the boomerang) and hit AC 10. Failure indicates that the boomerang lands 10 feet away from the thrower in a random direction.

Buckler-Axe, Dwarven

This weapon is favored by dwarven fighters. In addition to its obvious protective qualities, it proves a capable off-hand weapon or emergency weapon when disarmed.



Though at first glance the dwarven buckler-axe appears similar to a standard buckler, this weapon has enlarged blade-like edges at its top and bottom, allowing the wielder to swing it like a handaxe.

The dwarven buckler-axe also functions as a buckler, granting a +1 armor bonus, inflicting a -1 armor check penalty, and incurring a 5% arcane spell failure chance.

IF YOUR CHARACTERS ARE TIRED OF LONGSWORDS, BATTLEAXES, AND POLEARMS ...AN EXOTIC WEAPON CAN FIT THE BILL.

Chatkcha

This strange three-pointed crystalline or obsidian wedge was originally common to some humanoid tribes that lacked metalworking technology. However, it is now becoming more common among peoples with the ability to forge metal. As a result, most chatkcha encountered in the course of a campaign should be constructed of metal. The statistics given in the table above are for a metal chatkcha.

The chatkcha returns to its thrower on a miss. To catch a returning chatkcha, the character must make an attack roll (as if he were throwing the chatkcha) and hit AC 10. Failure indicates that the weapon falls to the ground 10 feet away from the thrower in a random direction. A nonproficient user who fails in his attempt to catch the chatkcha also suffers 1d4 damage from the weapon's sharp edges.

Crescent Knife

This weapon, which resembles a crescent-shaped blade affixed to a crossbar handle, allows its wielder to make two simultaneous attack rolls (using the same modifier) each time he attacks with it. Each attack is resolved separately.

Crusher, Orc

This heavy, clublike weapon is favored by orcs, particularly in battle formations.

An orc crusher has reach. You can strike opponents up to 10 feet away.

This long, flexible club is unlike any other sort of polearm. To use it, the wielder actually plants the butt of the crusher in the ground and grips the middle part of the weapon's haft. She then snaps the lethal head of the weapon forward toward an enemy by rapidly moving the haft back and forth.

Because of it's reach and flexibility, the crusher can be used to attack over a Medium-size or smaller ally in front of its wielder without penalty.

Gythka

This polearm has razor-sharp slashing blades—originally made of obsidian or similar materials—at both ends. Like the chatkcha, the gythka was often used by species without metalworking skills, but it is now more commonly found constructed of metal.

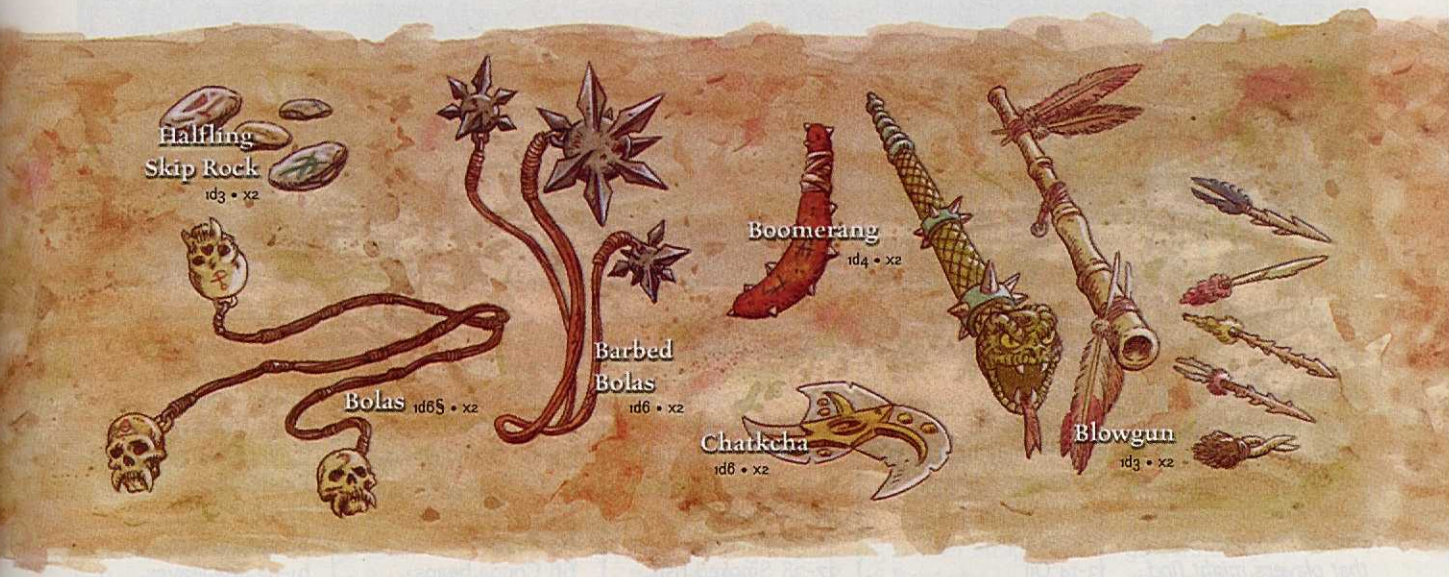
Because of the unique shape of the gythka's blades, you can also use it to make trip attacks. If you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you can drop the gythka to avoid being tripped.

A gythka is a double weapon. You can fight with it as if fighting with two weapons, but if you do, you incur all the normal attack penalties associated with fighting with two weapons: a one-handed weapon and a light weapon. (See the "Attacking with Two Weapons" section in Chapter 8: Combat in the *Player's Handbook*.) Note that you can make two trip attempts with the gythka as a full-round action. A creature using a double weapon in one hand, such as an ogre using a gythka, can't use it as a double weapon.

Lajatang or Halfling Lajatang

The lajatang is a staff with a crescent-shaped blade at each end. It is common to Eastern cultures or any culture with a tradition of monks and martial artists.

A lajatang is a double weapon. You can fight with it as if fighting with two weapons, but if you do, you incur all the normal attack penalties associated with fighting with two weapons: a one-handed weapon and a light weapon. (See the "Attacking with Two Weapons" section in



Chapter 8: Combat in the *Player's Handbook*.) A creature using a double weapon in one hand, such as a human using a halfling lajatang, can't use it as a double weapon.

A monk using a lajatang can strike with her unarmed base attack, including her more favorable number of attacks per round, along with other applicable attack modifiers. The monk can only use her more favorable number of attacks per round with one end of the weapon. The halfling lajatang is for Small monks.

Mancatcher

The mancatcher is used by city guards and others who prefer to capture their opponents unharmed.

A wielder who hits a Small or Medium-size opponent with a mancatcher can immediately initiate a grapple (as a free action) without provoking an attack of opportunity. (See "Grapple" in Chapter 8: Combat of the *Player's Handbook* for more information.) In addition to the normal options available to a grappler, the wielder of a mancatcher can attempt to pull his target to the ground (the equivalent of a trip attack, though no attack roll is necessary).

The mancatcher has reach and cannot be used against adjacent opponents.

It is rumored that the strange subterranean race known as the kuo-toa have a larger, more dangerous version of this weapon called a pincer staff.

Sai

Despite some images of the sai as a sharp weapon, it is actually blunt with pronglike extrusions designed to help catch and disarm opponent's weapons. The sai can also be thrown.

A monk using a sai can strike with her unarmed base attack, including her more favorable number of attacks per round, along with other applicable attack modifiers.

A sai user who attempts to disarm her opponent gains a +4 bonus to the opposed attack roll required. (You don't gain any bonus if someone tries to disarm your sai.)

Scimitar, Great (not pictured)

The great scimitar is common to Arabian-style settings and is often wielded by strong humanoid creatures (such as orcs).

Scourge

This three-tailed barbed whip allows the wielder to make three simultaneous attack rolls (at the same modifier) with each attack. Each attack roll is resolved separately.

The scourge is often dipped in an insinuative poison to take advantage of its multiple attacks.

Skiprock, Halfling

These polished, perfectly weighted stones are prized by halflings, for they are designed to ricochet off one target to strike a second.

If the halfling skiprock hits its target, it ricochets toward another target (of the thrower's choice) adjacent to the original target (that is, within 5 feet). The thrower immediately makes a second attack roll for the skiprock against the new target, using the same attack modifiers as the first roll (but with an additional -2 penalty).

Thinblade, Elven

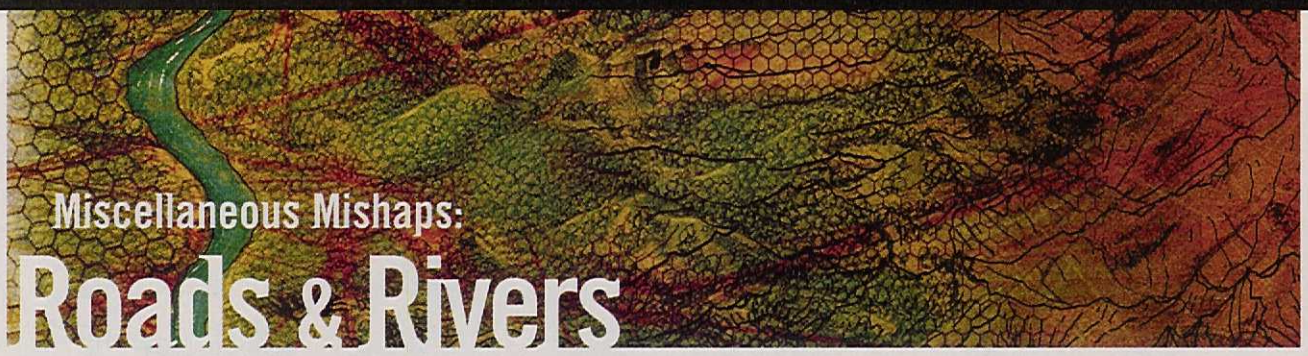
This rapierlike weapon is favored by dextrous elven fighters and rogues alike. Its thin, flexible blade slips easily into the seams of armor. Some elven nobles carry a thinblade—decorated with intricate filigree and tiny gemstones—as a sign of their station, even if they aren't proficient in its use.

You can use the Weapon Finesse feat to apply your Dexterity modifier instead of your Strength modifier to attack rolls with an elven thinblade.

Tortoise Blade, Gnome

This interesting contraption is designed to be used in a gnome warrior's off hand, and it is particularly useful in cramped tunnels or warrens where swinging a weapon is difficult or impossible. It looks like a turtle shell strapped to the gnome's wrist, with a daggerlike blade jutting out where the gnome's fingers should be.

The gnome tortoise blade also functions as a buckler, granting a +1 armor bonus, inflicting a -1 armor check penalty, and incurring a 5% arcane spell failure chance.



Miscellaneous Mishaps: Roads & Rivers

Dawn Ibach

Roads and rivers are the main avenues of travel in most fantasy roleplaying games. Here are a few examples of encounters that players might find while traveling. Roll at least once per day if traveling in urban areas and use this chart to determine random encounters if in a rural environment.

Subtable A: Barrel and Jar Contents

01-02 Ale
03-04 Beer
05-06 Salted fish
07-08 Salted beef
09-10 Sand
11-12 Wine
13-14 Oil
15-16 Vinegar
17 Blood
18 Sewage
19-20 Pitch
21-22 Sugar
23-24 Salt
25-26 Wet clay, pottery
27-28 Rainwater
29 Volcanic ash
30 Mortar, masonry
31-33 Dried apples
34 Coffee beans
35-36 Prunes
37-38 Smoked fish
39-40 Corks
41-42 Garlic cloves
43-44 Rice
45-46 Oats
47-48 Barley
49-50 Pickles
51-52 Figs & dates
53-54 Olives
55-56 Raisins
57-58 Nuts
59-60 Brandied fruits
61-62 Flour
63-64 Rye flour
65 Pepper
66 Cocoa beans
67-68 Brown sugar
69-70 Pickled onions
71-72 Pickled eggs
73-74 Marinated mushrooms
75-76 Pickled tomatoes
77-78 Olive oil
79-80 Honey
81-82 Molasses
83-84 Fruit preserves
85-86 Cider
87-88 Mead
89-90 Liquors
91-92 Tea leaves
93-94 Dried coconut
95-99 Empty
100 Green slime

BARRELS & JARS

Table 1: Road Encounters

01 Merchant with cart*
02 Merchant with wagon*
03 Merchant with several wagons*
04 Merchant with laden pack animals
05 Merchant, foreign
06 Craftsman with wares
07 Healer or herbalist and wagon
08 Charlatan healer and wagon
09 Trapper with skins
10 Hunter with game
11 Hunter without game
12 Fisherman with catch
13 Fisherman without catch
14 Tinker
15 Circus
16 Acting troupe
17 Pedestrian with pet
18 Pedestrian, lost
19 Pedestrian, foreign
20 Gypsies
21 Right of way dispute
22 Horse thieves
23 Horse merchant with wares
24 Cattle rustlers
25 Hangman's tree with occupant(s)
26 Post with hanging cage(s)
27 Adventurers, on foot
28 Adventurers, mounted
29 Farmers
30 Herdsmen
31 Military patrol
32 Road sign
33 Road sign, incorrect
34 Bridge, stone
35 Bridge, wooden
36 Logging wagons
37 Foot racers
38 Young apprentice on errand
39 Messenger
40 Messenger, mounted
41 Children playing game
42 Dog tied to tree, friendly or mean
43 Laborers on foot
44 Wagon of laborers
45 Toll collector, legitimate
46 Toll collector, false
47 Woman with basket of berries, fruit, vegetables, or flowers
48 Famous adventurer(s), mounted
49 Refugees
50 Family moving
51 Abandoned wagon
52 Wagon with broken wheel*
53 Wagon with lame draft animal*
54 Wagon with stubborn draft animal*
55 Religious pilgrims
56 Ceremony to god of travel
57 Slave wagon
58 Prisoner wagon
59 Outlaw(s)
60 Fire wagon
61 Prospector(s)
62 Humanoid tracks
63 Monster tracks
64 Funeral procession
65 Wedding procession
66 Local hero's homecoming
67 Enamored couple, strolling
68 Enamored couple, riding
69 Enamored couple, eloping
70 Bounty hunter
71 Construction crew
72 Domestic animal, blocking road
73 Domestic herd, blocking road
74 Bandits
75 Lone woman, cowled
76 Mercenary
77 Humanoid outcast
78 Monk with cart or wagon*
79 Young boy with cart or wagon*
80 Adventurers with cart or wagon*
81 Canal
82 Border patrol tower
83 Hayride
84 Warning sign
85 Patch of Wildflowers
86 Birds of prey, circling
87 Duck crossing
88 Deer crossing
89 Wounded pet or wild animal
90 Traveler, resting
91 Porter, looking for work
92 Fist fight
93 Young female noble and male escort
94 Young female noble and maid
95 Curtained litter with bearers
96 Young noble and friends
97 Wealthy citizen in carriage
98 Wealthy citizen on litter
99 Noble and retainers
100 Royalty and guards

ROADS

* See Subtables A and B for contents

Subtable B: Crate and Wagon Contents (with packing straw)

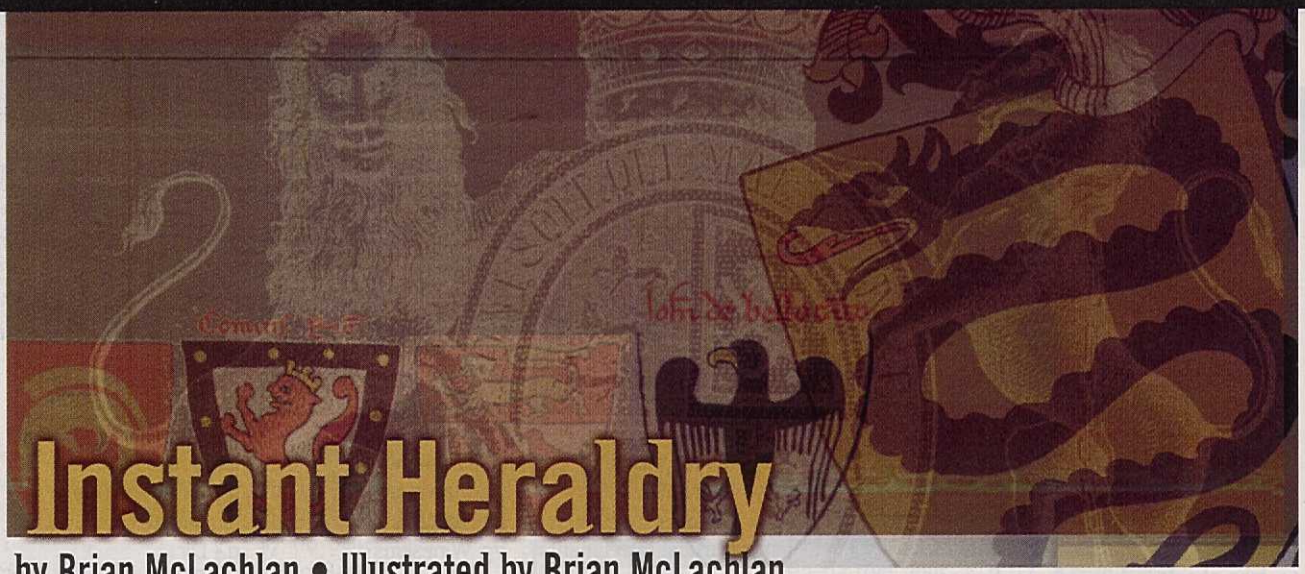
01 Manure
02 Wood
03 Rare wood
04 Nuts
05 Grain
06 Skins
07 Tabards
08 Pots and pans
09 Wool blankets
10 Coal
11 Dried leaves
12 Swords
13 Armor
14 Iron sheets
15 Backpacks, leather
16 Robes, religious
17 Fresh or rotten vegetables
18 Horse or hound barding
19 Steel strips
20 Arrows
21 Arrowheads
22 Rope ladder
23 Map or scroll cases
24 Mason tools
25 Bricks
26 Shale
27 Granite blocks
28 Shovels
29 Picks
30 Rakes and pitchforks
31 Spikes
32 Grain
33 Blocks of salt
34 Plow blades
35 Wagon wheels
36 Beans
37 Roots
38 Tree bark
39 Moss
40 Mushrooms
41 Dried peas
42 Corn
43 Dried carrots
44 Dried seaweed
45 Potatoes
46 Ginger roots
47 Dried wolfsbane
48 Turnips
49 String skeins
50 Seashells
51 Candles
52 Musical instruments
53 Ropes
54 Steel hunting traps
55 Bars of soap
56 Oil skins
57 Brooms & mops
58 Washboards
59 Large sacks
60 Chain
61 Bustles
62 Wood dowels, assorted
63 Yarn
64 Belt pouches
65 Pitons
66 Belts
67 Scarves and sashes
68 Boots
69 Hardtack
70 Snowshoes
71 Harnesses
72 Torches
73 Wineskins
74 Wooden buckets
75 Leather straps
76 Bandages
77 Tents
78 Tent poles
79 Stakes
80 Mixed dishes
81 Reed baskets
82 Paint pots
83 Firewood cords
84 Nails and hammers
85 Saws
86 Hinges
87 Hand mirrors
88 Wigs
89 Raw wool
90 Scissors
91 Crowbars
92 Bones
93 Silver cutlery, mixed
94 Dirt
95 Stowaway
96 Jars of dye
97 Monster eggs
98 Mannequins
99 Live plants in pots
100 Skulls

CRATES & WAGONS

Table 2: River Encounters

01 Barge with cargo and guards*
02 Barge with crew and no cargo
03 Barge with pirates*
04 Barge abandoned
05 Barge wrecked
06 Sailing ship with cargo*
07 Sailing ship with passengers
08 Sailing ship partially sunk
09 Rowboat with fisherman
10 Rowboat with adventurers
11 Rowboat with smugglers*
12 Rowboat overturned
13 Rowboat hidden in bushes
14 Raft, crude
15 Raft, with rudder and poles
16 Ferry, humanoid laborers
17 Ferry, aquatic creature laborer(s)
18 Ferry, abandoned
19 Children, picking reeds for baskets
20 Ford of shallow water
21 Ford of sand
22 Ford of rocks
23 Bridge, stone
24 Bridge, wooden
25 Bridge, rope
26 Bridge, unsafe
27 Animal trapped on floating tree
28 Animal trapped on island
29 Fisherman on bank
30 Fisherman in water, with net or spear
31 Frog or crayfish hunter(s)
32 Clam digger(s)
33 Bather(s)
34 Swimmer(s)
35 Women washing clothes
36 Corpse
37 Water fowl
38 Beaver dam
39 Fresh water dolphins
40 Wild animal or creature drinking
41 Wild animal or creature crossing
42 Wild animal or creature fishing
43 Herdsman with animals, drinking
44 Herdsman with animals, crossing
45 Women and children, picking berries
46 Travelers collecting water
47 Travelers watering mounts
48 Refuse, organic
49 School of fish
50 Turtles on log
51 Animal or monster tracks on bank
52 Monster fishing
53 Monster drinking
54 Rapids
55 Sandbar
56 Boulder(s)
57 Sharpened poles under water
58 Frenzied fish
59 Spawning fish
60 Raspberry bushes
61 Fisherman, sleeping
62 Tree swing over river
63 Rope pulley and carriage
64 Shallow bank
65 Eroded banks
66 Hunting party, drinking
67 Hunting hounds and master, drinking
68 Sylvan race, bathing or fishing
69 Travelers building raft
70 Travelers in magical boat
71 Druid picking up litter
72 Runaway or stowaway
73 Bridge, destroyed
74 Logs or log jam
75 Barrels, full or empty
76 Camp with fish cooking on bank
77 Logger cabin or camp on bank
78 Rope or chain across river
79 Toll collector, false or legitimate
80 River section choked with plants
81 Fallen tree blocking river
82 Huge corpse blocking river
83 Crumbled cliff face blocking river
84 Playful giant otter or beaver
85 Treant stuck on small island
86 Floating fish and turtles, dead
87 Sunken village on banks
88 Swollen section of river
89 Fog
90 Fireflies
91 Pier, fishing or boat
92 Banks hidden by tall reeds
93 Hot springs, water steams
94 Muddy water
95 Playful creatures throw nuts or pine cones at passersby
96 Carnivorous lily pads
97 Small cliff with partially submerged cave filled with bats
98 Two ships or boats in combat
99 Ship with flag of noble house
100 Ship with flag of royal house and escort

RIVERS



Instant Heraldry

by Brian McLachlan • Illustrated by Brian McLachlan

Design your own heraldic devices without that pesky learning curve.

Carrying a shield painted with the image of a bloody skull can reveal a great deal about someone and what they stand for. No kingdom, great hero, or even common foot soldier should be without an emblem to fight behind. This article will help you add this important and fun visual element to your campaigns.

You don't need to be an artist to create heraldic symbols. Don't worry about drawing crests with calligraphy and decorative panels detailing a personal history. You can leave that sort of design to verbal description. All you need is a group of basic symbols.

When a kingdom requires hundreds of shields with their emblem, the king probably won't have skilled artists painting each of them. If the symbol you have in mind cannot be redrawn by a squire or blacksmith, it's too complicated. These symbols must also be simple enough to be read on a flag or war banner from a distance so that troops can be easily identified.

When creating an image to represent a kingdom or city, an idea might jump to mind easily. However, especially when you require many at once, you might want a little help. To create your own icons for these kingdoms, you should begin by deciding on an appropriate symbol for their location. Below are a few tables to help you get started. If you're in a hurry, roll a die to generate the key element of the heraldry. Combine two or more of the suggested symbols for more variety.

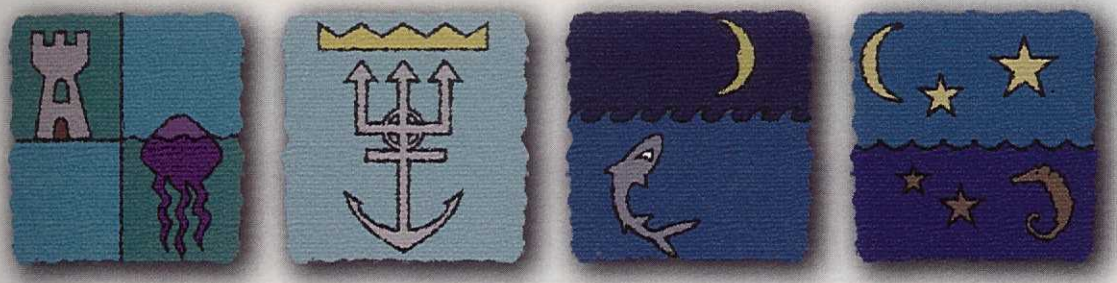
An emblem should give viewers an idea of the nature of the kingdom. While images that denote location are fairly easy to create, depicting alignment, because it is an abstract concept, becomes a little harder. As a solution to this problem you can use animals that have good or evil reputations. **Tables 2A** and **2B** have fantastic creatures that can conjure up the feeling of both good and evil. Since animals can be used to represent location (a camel for a desert), you should choose a creature that makes sense in both regards (a scorpion for a desert and evil). Some creatures, like dragons, have no boundaries, while some have reputations that supersede their location, such as lions. Deciding which animal is right for your kingdom has many variables, but the choice should be a simple one once you put it into the context of your game.

After that, or even instead of that, you might wish to illustrate the kingdom's uniqueness. A town is principally defined by it's business and exports. **Table 3** contains a list of possible icons for these services and skills.

To create a symbol for a hero, the system is much the same. If the hero is associated with a particular area (such as a ranger who looks over a forest) you can use a location. For the most part, adventurers tend to be wanderers and explorers. Instead of using a location, you might want an icon that represents their favored activity or class. This is quite simple when you show a fighter's longsword or warhammer, but when you need to represent magic or thievery it becomes more abstract. Some suggestions for magic and thieving icons are listed below on **Tables 4** and **5**.

You might find that you want another image that more personally represents the character. It would be impossible to list all the various possibilities, so here are a few suggestions: The character might have a favored skill that could be represented, such as a rope for the Use Rope skill, or a gem for Profession (jeweller). Important moments from a person's past are often used in heraldry. Possibilities include: a defeated foe (represented with a sword through him), the freeing of kidnapped people (broken shackles), or the recovery of an important item (depicted by an image of the item).

Whether you are creating an emblem for a town, person, or an entire kingdom, these tables should give you a good start. There are many more familiar icons, such as crowns, tears, and skulls, which are not mentioned below but have their own obvious connotations. Remember that heraldry is a visual language, so it is okay to reuse symbols in different contexts. If you use the symbols regularly, your PCs will come to know whether the symbol of the wyvern and crescent moon should invoke fear, respect, or derision.



Aquatic
For aquatic elves, sea-side kingdoms, sahuagin, locathah, or mer-folk.

War
For warriors, adventurers, soldiers, conquering armies, or defenders of a kingdom.

Magic
Wizards, sorcerers, magic guilds, alchemists, or lands rich in magic might use icons like these.

Giants
The giant's type is often a factor in such simple designs: hill giants, stone giants, frost giants, and cloud giants.

Aerial
Not only flying creatures but also those who make their homes in the sky might use such emblems.

Elves
Elven symbols are also useful for druids, rangers, and other characters associated with the wild.

Location

Table 1A: Forest (roll 1d10)

1	Berries
2	Forest animal
3	Leaf
4	Log
5	Maple key
6	Mushroom
7	Nuts
8	Pine cone
9	Tree
10	Wildflower

Table 1B: Desert (roll 1d10)

1	Cactus
2	Crescent moon
3	Desert animal
4	Joshua tree
5	Oasis
6	Palm tree
7	Sand dune
8	Sun
9	Tent
10	Well

Table 1C: Marsh (roll 1d6)

1	Cattails
2	Fallen log
3	Lily pad
4	Marsh animal
5	Muddy water
6	Willow tree

Table 1D: Port town (roll 1d10)

1	Anchor
2	Boat
3	Crustacean
4	Fish
5	Fishing net
6	Lighthouse
7	Stars
8	Sextant
9	Trident
10	Waves

Table 1E: Arctic (roll 1d6)

1	Arctic animal
2	Iceberg
3	Icicle
4	Igloo
5	Snowflake
6	Snowshoe

Alignment

Table 2A: Evil (roll 1d20)

1	Alligator (patient)
2	Bat (nocturnal)
3	Behir (territorial)
4	Bulette (ferocious)
5	Dragon (powerful)
6	Hydra (multiple centers of power)
7	Wasp (strong in numbers)
8	Jackal (sneaky)
9	Lizard (quick)
10	Octopus (hands on everything)
11	Rat (sneaky)
12	Scorpion (deadly)
13	Shark (vicious)
14	Snake (deadly)
15	Spider (scheming)
16	Toad (sturdy)
17	Vulture (opportunistic)
18	Wolverine (ferocious)
19	Worm (subterranean)
20	Wyvern (powerful)

Table 2B: Good (roll 1d20)

1	Badger (courageous)
2	Bear (strong)
3	Bull (strong willed)
4	Butterfly (kind)
5	Cat (agile)
6	Dragon (powerful)
7	Eagle (noble)
8	Elephant (forceful)
9	Falcon (noble)
10	Fox (sly)
11	Griffon (fierce)
12	Hound (loyal)
13	Lion (courageous)
14	Rabbit (quick)
15	Rhino (temperamental)
16	Roc (powerful)
17	Songbird (pleasant)
18	Stag (strong)
19	Tiger (fierce)
20	Unicorn (pure)

Town, Rogues, and Magic

Table 3: Town (roll 1d20)

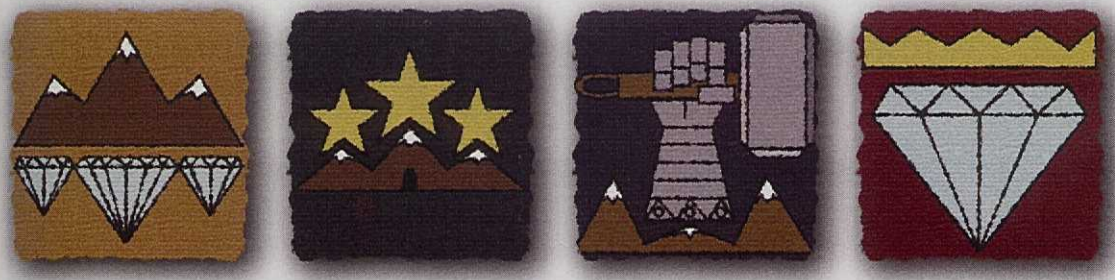
1	Anvil
2	Barrel
3	Bellows
4	Book
5	Bottle
6	Fish
7	Gems
8	Gold
9	Hammer
10	Horseshoe
11	Instrument
12	Jewelry
13	Lumber
14	Mining cart
15	Ore
16	Pick
17	Scythe
18	Sickle
19	Trident
20	Wheat sheaf

Table 4: Rogues (roll 1d20)

1	Bag of loot
2	Bottle of poison
3	Broken lock
4	Crescent moon
5	Cut money purse
6	Dagger
7	Door
8	Ear
9	Eye
10	Grappling hook
11	Hand taking jewelry
12	Jewels
13	Key
14	Lock pick
15	Man's shadow
16	Nocturnal animal
17	Poisonous animal
18	Stars
19	Treasure chest
20	Web

Table 5: Magic (roll 1d20)

1	Book
2	Candle
3	Cauldron
4	Conical hat
5	Crystal ball
6	Eye
7	Fireball
8	Hand
9	Jar
10	Key
11	Lightning bolt
12	Mortar and pestle
13	Moon
14	Potion
15	Quill
16	Ring
17	Spiral
18	Stars
19	Wand
20	Wishbone



Dwarves

Mountains and minerals are obvious symbols for dwarves, and earth-tones and black are common colors.

Orcs

Images of violence and death are prominent in orc heraldry.

Necromancers

Death imagery works for demons and devils as well as evil spellcasters and intelligent undead.

Minotaurs

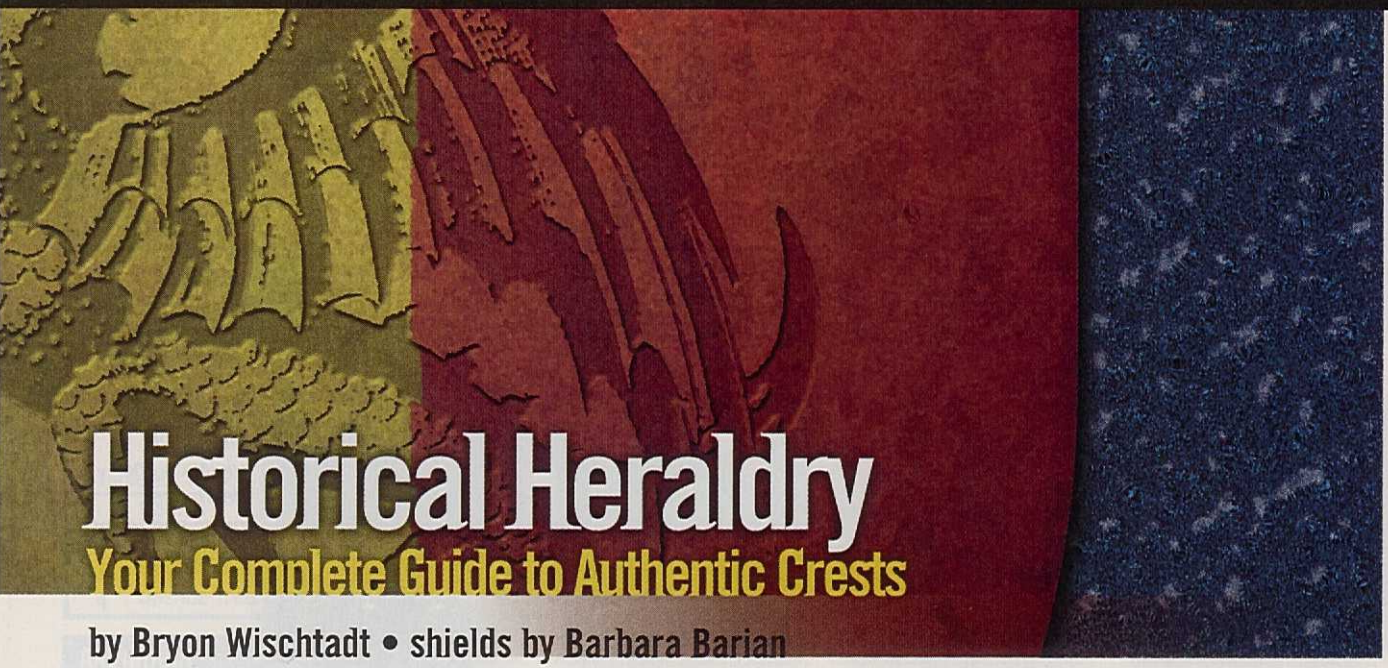
If your campaign includes unusual races like the bull-headed minotaurs, include them in your heraldic devices.

Fire

The other three elements—water, earth, and air—can also make good heraldic symbols in a fantasy world.

Drow

Creatures associated with a particular race—as spiders are with the drow—make good symbols.



Historical Heraldry

Your Complete Guide to Authentic Crests

by Bryon Wischtadt • shields by Barbara Barian

The origins of European heraldry have been disputed for several hundred years. Some scholars said that the first crusaders brought the Byzantine, or possibly Muslim, custom back to Europe. Others insisted that the Greeks and Romans carried family and military crests on their shields, thus setting the heraldic precedent. Still others pointed to the runes and symbols of barbarians and 10th-century Germano-Scandinavia as the origin of Western European heraldry.

Today, we know that sometime between the late 11th century and the first quarter of the 12th century, warriors started identifying themselves by symbols and colors painted on their shields. By the early 14th century, nearly every facet of Western European life—from corporation to church, from common peasant to nobility—had been influenced by heraldry. Arms symbolized countries, noble families, and the armies of men who fought for them, filling fest halls and churches with the colors of their secular and ecclesiastic sponsors.

THE COAT OF ARMS

When the painted shields of warriors began to be recorded into long parchment documents known as "rolls of arms" or *aides-mémoires*, heralds established rigid guidelines to govern their recording. When arms are transcribed into words, this is known as a *blazon*. A blazon is held to be more official than the graphically rendered arms themselves, so when a dispute between two arms might arise, the blazon is referred to. Colors referred to by a blazon are called *tinctures*.

TINCTURES

Arms are represented by three main groups of tincture: colors, metals, and furs. These tinctures are used to describe all elements depicted on a coat of arms; however, the actual hue of tincture is up to the artist depicting the blazon. This is a tradition that has continued since the time of Medieval heralds, who had to hand mix paints, thus making it nearly impossible to match colors between heralds.

Until recently, it was not practical to render arms in full color, so heralds across Europe used varying techniques to depict colors in black and white. To remedy this, a group of engravers in Antwerp during the early 17th century perfected a method called *hatching*, by which tinctures could be universally represented in black and white drawings and engravings. Another technique used in later years was *tricking*, where the abbreviations of the colors were either positioned in the area of tincture or they were placed outside the arms and tied into the area by a line. A practice developed in 1414 by King Alphonse V of the Two Sicilys, also known as the Sicily Herald, tied the tinctures to gemstones and the planets. This secondary blazonry stipulated that dukes, earls, and barons were to have their arms blazoned by gemstones, and planets were to be used for princes, kings and emperors.

The Rule of Tinctures

There is one basic rule for the use of tinctures. A color, metal, or fur can be combined with another tincture of the remaining two categories, but not with another from the same category. This rule developed because tinctures are not easily distinguishable from one another at a distance.

There are five distinct exceptions to this convention. First, if good heraldry would result in spite of "illegal" combinations of tinctures, the arms might be allowed. Second, the rule of tinctures does not extend to chiefs, cantons, or bordures. Third, some fields, such as vair or parted fields like *barry, bendy,* and *checky* (see Parition Lines below), are considered "*neutral,*" and can therefore take *charges* of tincture. Fourth, a charge can be described as being emblazoned in its naturally occurring or proper coloration. For example, a sword could retain its natural steel color on an argent background. The last exception occurs when parts of an animal charge (tongue, claws, teeth, and so on) are given a different tincture than their bodies.

In the cases of *marshalling*, *differencing*, *augmentation*, or *abatement*, when colors or metals touch one another, the charges are sometimes *fimbriated* or divided by a thin line of tincture to separate two metals or two colors.

Colors

Azure (Blue)
Tricking: Az or B
Symbolism: Loyalty and truth
Gem: Sapphire
Planet: Jupiter

Gules (Red)
Tricking: Gu
Symbolism: Military fortitude and magnanimity
Gem: Ruby
Planet: Mars

Sable (Black)
Tricking: Sa
Symbolism: Constancy, sometimes grief
Gem: Diamond
Planet: Saturn

Vert (Green)
Tricking: Vt or Sin (France)
Symbolism: Hope, joy, and sometimes loyalty in love
Gem: Emerald
Planet: Venus

Purpure (Purple)
Tricking: Purp
Symbolism: Royal majesty, sovereignty and justice
Gem: Amethyst
Planet: Mercury

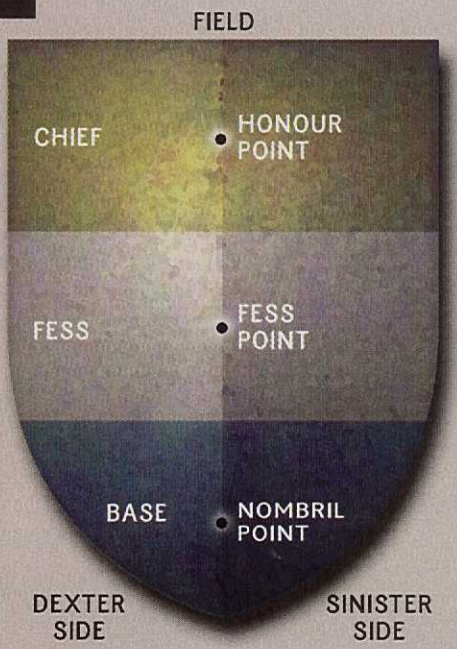
Tenne or Tawny (Orange-Red)
(seldom used except in abatements)
Symbolism: Worthy ambition
Gem: Jacinth
Planet: the Dragon's Head (point of eclipse with the sun disappearing, thought to have been caused by a dragon)

Sanguine (Purple-Red)
(seldom used except in abatements)
Symbolism: Not hasty in battle, yet a victor
Gem: Sardonyx
Planet: the Dragon's Tail (point of eclipse with the sun emerging)

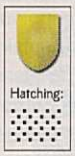
Points of the Shield

Field: the surface of the shield
Chief: the upper third of the shield
Fess: the middle third of the shield
Base: the lower third of the shield
Dexter: the left side of the shield (right from wielder's perspective)
Sinister: the right side of the shield (left from wielder's perspective)

Three points are used for accurate positioning of the elements used in blazoning. They are:
Fess: This point is at the center of the shield, halfway between the chief (top) and base (bottom) at the centerline of the shield.
Honour: The honour point sits between the top and bottom of the chief on the center line of the field.
Nombril: This point is halfway between the the top and bottom of the base, on the center line of the field.



Metals



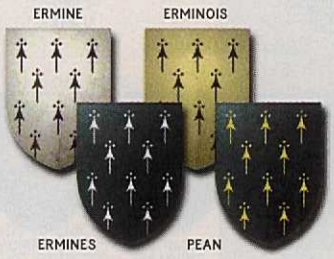
Or (Gold or Yellow)
Tricking: Or
Symbolism: Generosity
Gem: Topaz
Planet: Sol (Sun)

Argent (Silver or White)
Tricking: Ag
Symbolism: Peace and sincerity
Gem: Pearl
Planet: Luna (Moon)

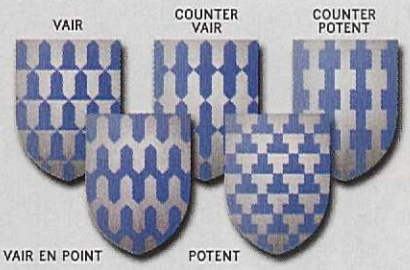
Furs

There are two main types of furs used in heraldry: ermine and vair. Both have special names for variations in arrangement and color.

Ermine
Ermine represents the fur of the creature of the same name, a relative of the weasel.



Vair
Vair originated from the use of the skins of the blue-gray squirrel.



HERALDRY GLOSSARY

Abatement
a change to a coat of arms indicating a shameful act or crime

Augmentation
a change to a coat of arms granted to mark a notable or heroic deed

Bordure
a band that occupies the border of a sheild

Cadency
changes made to a family's coat of arms to indicate different descendants

Charge
a shape, character, creature, or object on the field of a shield

Chief
the upper third of the shield

Canton
a block that occupies a third of the area of the chief, normally placed in the dexter chief corner

Dexter
the left side of a coat of arms

Differencing
a term used to refer to the various forms of cadency

Field
the background of a coat of arms, depicted as white to represent the metal of a shield

Marshalling
combining the coats of arms of two families after a marriage

Ordinary
a shape on the field of arms, a type of charge

Partition Lines

THE ARMS

The items on a coat of arms can be divided into one of a few groups: points, partition lines, ordinaries, and charges.

Partition Lines

The lines used to partition the shield are given specific names. If these lines are used to simply divide a shield, it is blazoned "*party per*" then the division. If used as a charge themselves, they are known as *ordinaries*.

Ornamental Lines

Partition lines do not have to be straight to retain their name or symbolism. They can instead take on additional meaning with the added decoration.

Ordinaries

Ordinaries are shapes on the field of arms named according to the position and direction they take. Ordinaries are divided into three groups: *honorable ordinaries*, *ordinaries*, and *subordinaries*. These divisions are based on the area of the field the ordinaries cover. Narrower forms, called *diminutives*, are half or less than the normal width and usually occur in groups. Diminutives must show the field on either side and between each other.

Honorable Ordinaries

The honorable ordinaries are said to have originated with the fastenings, buckles, and clamps of the shield. They normally occupy up to a third of the surface area of the shield. They are blazoned immediately after the field is described.

Ordinaries

This is the "catch-all" category of ordinaries which consists of those shapes that do not fall into the honorable ordinary or subordinary categories. Ordinaries cover about a fifth of the field. Some of the most common ordinaries are detailed below.

Subordinaries

Scholars do not agree upon the division between ordinaries and subordinaries. Some say that the subordinaries must use less than one fifth of the field's area. Regardless of the disputed qualifications, many heraldic authorities do agree that the items below are to be considered subordiniaries. Subordinaries usually do not have diminutives.

Charges

Charge is a term for anything that appears on a shield. Ordinaries are a sub-classification of charges themselves.

If a charge is placed on an ordinary or another charge, it is depicted upright. When a charge is placed on a bend, it is positioned at the same angle as the bend. A field that is decorated by a regular pattern of charges is known as a *semy of* or *poudry of* that charge.

Beasts

Animals decorated shields long before rules of heraldry were devised, so it is not surprising that they have been a central part of heraldry since the beginning.

When describing an animal charge, start with the posture, add the head position (if it differs from the norm), tail characteristics (if any), and finally any additional attributes.

Postures:

Ambulant - walking
Aspect - the position that an animal occupies with respect to the viewer. It might be *full aspect* (full faced looking at the viewer), *passant* (with its side to the viewer), or *trian aspect* (between the two).
Bicorporate - having two bodies, with one set of forepaws and one head
Couchant - laying down with the head raised
Descending - facing the base
Descent - coming down from the chief as if leaping downward
Dormant - sleeping
Effare - rearing out of rage or fear
Enraged - leaping
Furiosant - enraged or furious, especially when referring to a bull
Guardant - looking at the observer
Genuant - kneeling
Jessant - springing or shooting up
Naissant - coming out of an ordinary
Natant - represented horizontally, as if swimming
Passant - walking with the dexter paw raised
Pose - walking with all four feet on the ground (also *statant*)
Preying - in a position for devouring prey
Rampant - beasts of prey with forepaws raised, and the rear dexter leg higher than the sinister, facing dexter
Rangant - enraged or furious, especially when referring to a bull
Repassant - walking toward the sinister side of the shield
Salient - leaping, forepaws in the dexter chief, hind feet in the sinister base
Sejant - beasts of prey sitting
Sejant affronte - sitting with forepaws extended, facing gardant
Springing - beasts of the hunt leaping (like *salient*)
Statant - standing with all four feet on the ground (also *pose*)
Tergant - showing the back
Trian - facing between *affronte* and guardant
Trippant - a beast of the hunt walking with the dexter paw raised (like *passant*)
Vigilant - as if looking for prey

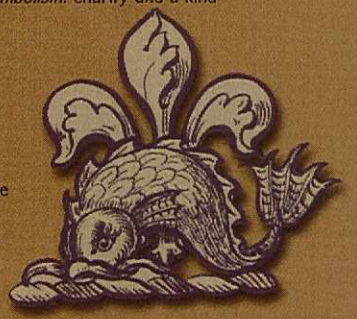
Postures of two or more animals:

Accosted - two animals proceeding side by side
Addorsed - two animals placed back to back
Affronte - two animals facing each other
Coambulant - animals walking together
Combatant - animals facing each other as if fighting
Confronte - two animals face to face

BEASTS

Bear
Symbolism: ferocity when protecting kindred
Beaver
Symbolism: perseverance and industriousness
Boar
Symbolism: a fierce combatant who ceases fighting only at death
Bull, Buffalo, and Ox
Symbolism: valor and nobility

Camel
Symbolism: docility, patience, and indefatigable perseverance
Cat, Catamount, Cat-A-Mountain, Musion, and Wild Cat
Symbolism: liberty, vigilance, foresight, and courage
Dolphin
Variants: same as for fish (see below)
Symbolism: charity and a kind affection towards children; the Crown Prince of France
Elephant
Symbolism: courage and strength
Fish and Whales
Although the type of fish is not always blazoned, the position on the arms is. The common heraldic fish include herring, chalbot, barbel, pike, conger, roach, and trout. Whales are rarely used.
Variants: naiant (horizontal); *hauriant* (vertical, as if leaping); *urinant* (vertical, as if diving); *embowed* (bent); *springing* (when placed on a bend)
Symbolism: used by those who made their living or performed a notable deed on the sea.



Fox
Symbolism: uses wit or wisdom to defend himself
Frog
Symbolism: the devil; evil
Goat
Symbolism: emblem of the martial man who achieves victory by policy rather than valor
Hedgehog, Urchin, and Urcheon
Symbolism: provident provider
Horse
Variants: barded (in harness or armor); *enraged* (like salient), *free* (on the field), *furnished* (bridled, saddled, and equipped); *prancing* (rearing); *laird* (a gray horse); *bayard* (a bay horse); *reined* (reins of a different tincture than the body)
Symbolism: readiness for all tasks for king and country

Hound, Greyhound, Mastiff, Alaund, and Talbot
Variants: ravissant (jumping or salient)
Symbolism: courage, vigilance, and loyal fidelity

Lamb
Symbolism: gentleness and patience under suffering
Leopard
Symbolism: a valiant and hardy warrior
Lion
Variants: resignant (tail not seen)
Symbolism: majesty and superiority; a man of brave and deathless courage
Lynx
Symbolism: possessing such keen eyesight that it was believed to see through walls

Panther
Symbolism: a beautiful and fierce woman, tender and loving to her young, who will defend them to the death
Rabbit, Cony, and Hare
The hare is seldom used in heraldry, being the subject of legend and superstition.
Variants: boltant (springing forward)
Symbolism: one who enjoys a retired life of peace
Ram and Sheep
Symbolism: authority

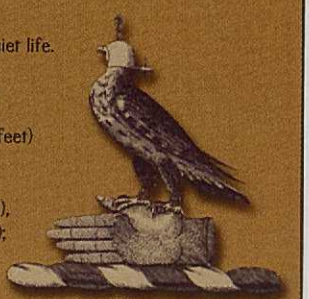
Rhinoceros
Symbolism: possessing great ferocity when aroused
Snake
Variants: declinant (tail pointing straight down); *nowed* (knotted); *retorted* (two or more wreathed together intertwined, or fretted in a knot); *enveloped* (referring to the prey a snake has entwined); *glissant* (gliding); *erect* (raised to strike)
Symbolism: wisdom

Squirrel
The squirrel is nearly always depicted as a red squirrel *sejant*, often holding a nut.
Variants: saltant (springing forward)
Symbolism: sylvan retirement being the delight of its bearer
Stag, Hart, Buck and Deer
Symbolism: policy, peace and harmony

Tiger
Symbolism: great fierceness and valor when enraged; one whose resentment will be dangerous
Tortoise
Variants: gradient (walking)
Symbolism: invulnerability to attack
Wolf
Symbolism: one who is dangerous to assault or thwart, a valiant commander who achieves his goal after long sieges and hard enterprises

BIRDS

Crow
Symbolism: a settled habitation and a quiet life.
Dove
Symbolism: love, constancy, and peace
Duck and Goose
Variants: canned (ducks without bills or feet)
Symbolism: a man of many resources
Eagle
Variants: displayed (wings fully expanded), *majesty* (crowned and wielding a scepter); *recursant* (displayed with its back to the



Enury - eight animals serving as a *bordure*
Issuant - a beast coming out of another (typically from the mouth)
Respectant - two animals face to face
Retracted - one beast shorter than another
Succeedant - following one another
Vorant - when an animal is shown eating another (also devouring)

Head Position:

At Gaze - a beast of the chase looking at the observer
Bicapitated - having two heads
Contourne - facing to the *sinister* (*counter*)
Gardant - looking at the observer
Regardant - facing backward
Spectant - looking toward the *dexter chief* (nose *bendwise*)
Suspectant - looking upward (also *spectant*)

Tail Characteristics:

Coward - tail between the legs
Defamed - without its tail
Double Queued - having two tails
Extended - straight out horizontal
Nowed - a knotted tail
Queued - a tail of a different tincture than the body

Attributes:

Accolle - having a crown on its head or a collar around its neck
Allumee - having red or sparkling eyes
Anime - being of a different tincture than natural; when animals are breathing fire out their mouths
Armed - teeth and claws of a different tincture than the body
Bitted - When a horse's bit is colored different than the body, it is said to be *bitted of* that tincture
Corned - horns of a different tincture than the body
Crined - with hair of a different tincture than natural
Crowned - wearing a crown (A lion may be *crowned ducally*, wearing a duke's crown; or *crowned royally*, wearing a king's crown)
Cuppa - fur of any color and metal (*potent-counter-potent*)
Disarmed - without claws, teeth, or beak
Eared - ears of a different tincture than the body
Embrued - with a bloody mouth
Enarmed - with horns and hoofs of a different tincture than the body
Incensed - fire shooting out of the eyes
Gorged - with a crown or collar about its neck (emblazoned *gorged with a crown* or *gorged with a collar*)
Horned - with horns of a different tincture than the body
Inflamed - burning
Langued - having the tongue visible and of a different tincture than the body
Marined - having the lower body of a fish
Morne - without a tongue, teeth, or claws
Muzzled - wearing a muzzle
Reflected - a chain or line from the collar thrown over the back (also *reflexed*)
Transfixed - pierced by an arrow (also *transpierced*)
Tusked - tusks of a different tincture than the body
Unglued - hooves of a different tincture than the body
Vulned - wounded
Vulning - the act of wounding

Methods of describing parts of animals:

Couped - cut off from the body in a clean, straight line
Couped close - when referring to the head, cut so that no neck shows
Demi - when only half an animal is displayed
Erased - cut off or torn from the body, leaving jagged ends
Gamb - a foreleg *couped* or *erased* at the "shoulder"
Mask - the face-on head of a fox or badger
Paw - a foreleg *couped* or *erased* at the "elbow"
Queue - the tail

Birds

When describing a bird charge, start with the posture, add the wing position (if it differs from that in the posture), and then add any additional attributes if any are present.

Postures:

Au vol - on the wing (*volant*)
Descending - facing the base
Displayed - wings and legs fully expanded, especially when referring to an eagle
Eyrant - nested birds
Perched - as if perched on an object
Preying - in a position for devouring prey
Rising - rising into flight (also *rousant* or *surgiant*)
Sourant - flying upwards
Trussed - standing with wings folded closed to the body (also *closed*)
Volant - flying horizontally

Wing Position:

Addorsed - placed back to back
Closed - standing with wings folded close to the body
Disclosed - wings open with the tips pointing downward
Displayed wings inverted - as displayed with wing tips pointing down
Elevated - wings upright and extended
Inverted - wing tips pointing downward
Ouvert - wings half open as if about to leap into flight
Spread eagle - wings fully expanded, especially when referring to an eagle

Attributes:

Aquilate - to adorn with eagles' heads
Aspectant - two birds facing one another
Armed - claws of a different tincture than the body
Beaked - when the beak is a different color than the body (also called *beque)*
Belled - when a hawk or falcon has bells attached to its legs
Bicapitated - having two heads
Decked - when the edge of the feathers are a different tincture than the body
Disarmed - without claws, and beak
Dismembered - not having legs or feet
Enalurion - eight birds serving as a *bordure*
Hooded - a bird of prey with a hood on
Inflamed - burning
Langued - having the tongue visible and of a different tincture than the body
Legged - legs of a different tincture than the body (also *membered*)
Pride - displaying the tail in a circular shape
Vulned - wounded
Vulning - the act of wounding
Winged - wings a different tincture than the body

Insects

When describing an insect charge, start with the posture, add the head position (if it differs from the norm), tail characteristics (if any), and finally any additional attributes. Crickets, scorpions, and even leeches have also been used in coats of arms.

observer); *recursant volant in pale* (flying upward with its back facing the viewer); an *osprey* is always depicted as a white eagle

Symbolism: a man of action, ever more occupied in high and weighty affairs; one of lofty spirit, ingenuity, and judicious in matters of ambiguity

Falcon or Hawk

Falcons differ from eagles by having smooth heads and necks.

Variants: jessed, hooded and belled (wearing leather thongs or jesses, a hood, and bells); *at prey* (feeding)

Symbolism: one eager or hot in the pursuit of an object much desired

Martlet

Symbolism: nobility aquired through accomplishments

Owl

Symbolism: vigilant and acute of wit

Peacock

Variants: eyed (when referring to the tail feathers); *pride* (displaying the tail in a circular shape, "a peacock in his pride")

Symbolism: beauty and pride of carriage

Pelican

Variants: vulning (wounding herself); *in her piety* (feeding her young)

Symbolism: devoted and self-sacrificing charity

Raven

Symbolism: one who has become the architect of his own fortunes or someone of enduring constancy of nature

Rooster or Cock

Variants: when the beak, comb, wattles, and spur are of a different tincture than the rest of the body, the cock is said to be *beaked, wattled, and armed.*

Symbolism: always ready for battle, ready to fight to the death

Stork

Symbolism: filial duty, emblem of a grateful man

Swallow

Symbolism: one who is prompt and ready in the dispatch of his business

Swan

Symbolism: a lover of poetry and harmony

INSECTS

Ant

Symbolism: a man of great labor, wisdom and providence.

Bee

Variants: volant (seen from above with wings extended)

Symbolism: focused industriousness

Grasshopper

Symbolism: wisdom and nobility

Snail

Symbolism: deliberation and perseverance

Spider

Symbolism: wisdom, labor, and providence in all affairs

MYTHICAL BEASTS

Allerion

a mythical eagle without a beak or feet, drawn with its wings expanded, tips pointing downward

Symbolism: a vanquished and

defeated imperialist; one who has been maimed in war or prevented from fully asserting his power

Angels, Cherubs and Seraphs
drawn as winged people and children
Symbolism: dignity, glory, and honor
Centuar
Variants: sagitarrius (carrying a bow and arrow)
Symbolism: eminent in the field
Chimera
Symbolism: aggression, vigilance, and defiance
Cockatrice
Symbolism: a terror to all beholders
Dragon
Symbolism: a most valiant defender of treasure
Griffon, Gryphon
Symbolism: A valorous soldier whose magnanimity is such that he will dare all dangers, and even death itself, rather than become captive

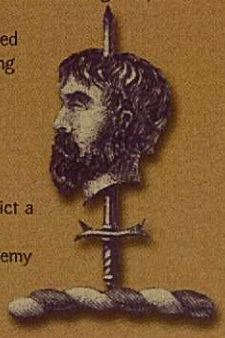
Harpy
Symbolism: ferocity under provocation

Hydra
Symbolism: the conquest of a very powerful enemy
Mermaid, Merman, Triton
Symbolism: eloquence
Pegasus
Symbolism: exceeding activity and energy of mind
Phoenix
Symbolism: resurrection and rebirth
Sphinx
Symbolism: omniscience and secrecy
Unicorn
Symbolism: extreme courage
Wyvern
Symbolism: valiant defender of treasure

HUMAN FIGURE

Arm
Variants: cubit (an arm cut off at the elbow); *elbowed* (whole arm, bent at the elbow, fist upward)

Symbolism: a laborious and industrious person.
Eye
Symbolism: destiny in government
Flaming Heart
Symbolism: ardent affection
Foot
Symbolism: strength, stability, and expedition
Hand
Variants: apaume (showing the palm); *aversant* or *dorsed* (turned away, showing only the back); *poing* (in a fist)
Symbolism: faith, sincerity and justice; a red hand on a canton, escutcheon, or quarter is the mark of a baronet
Head
Often, the head of an adversary, is used to depict a specific event or battle.
Symbolism: honor or victory over a specific enemy
Heart
Symbolism: charity, sincerity



Mythical Beasts
Monsters, like mundane beasts, have adorned shields since before heraldry began. The symbolism of such creatures is seldom consistent. Each tends to represent the coat of arms possessor rather than a specific concept or ideal. When describing a monster charge, use the beast or bird attributes that best fit the creature's characteristics, keeping with the beast blazon structure.

The Human Figure
The whole human figure is used infrequently in heraldry, and when used, often represents the divine influence of the church, or a concept such as justice or liberty. When describing a human charge, use the beast attributes

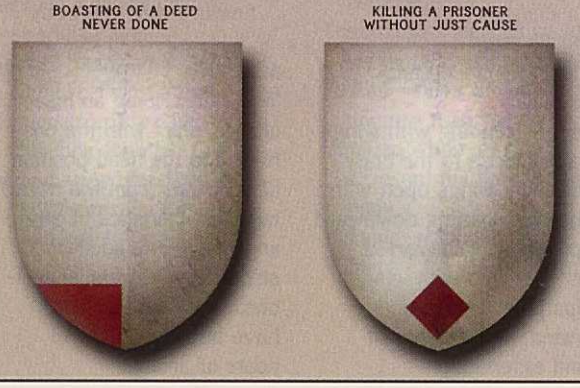
Flora
Nearly all types of vegetation have been used in heraldry. Trees, usually laurel, palm, holly, or oak, can be depicted wholly, or as branches or even sprigs of leaves. When describing flora as a charge, define any additional attributes after the charge is described. Grass, grain, vegetables, and fruit are also used, often by merchants and commoners who work in the fields and orchards.

Attributes:
Averdant - covered with green herbage
Bladed - when the stalk of a grain is tinctured differently than the ear
Blasted - a leafless tree
Blighted - a leafless tree
Enveloped - referring to an object vegetation has entwined
Eradicated - an uprooted tree
Fructed - bearing fruit
Hurst - a small group of trees
Jessant - springing or shooting up
Mooted - uprooted
Slashed - torn from the stalk or trunk

Inanimate Objects
Nearly every object of everyday life has been used as a charge on a coat of arms.

Abatements

Since a grant of arms could not be easily revoked, the abatement was devised. This served the same purpose as augmentation, to advertise the actions of the bearer, but abatements were a change to a coat of arms that symbolized a shameful act or crime. The most widely used abatement is that of treason, usually displayed leading up to and during the accused arminger's execution.

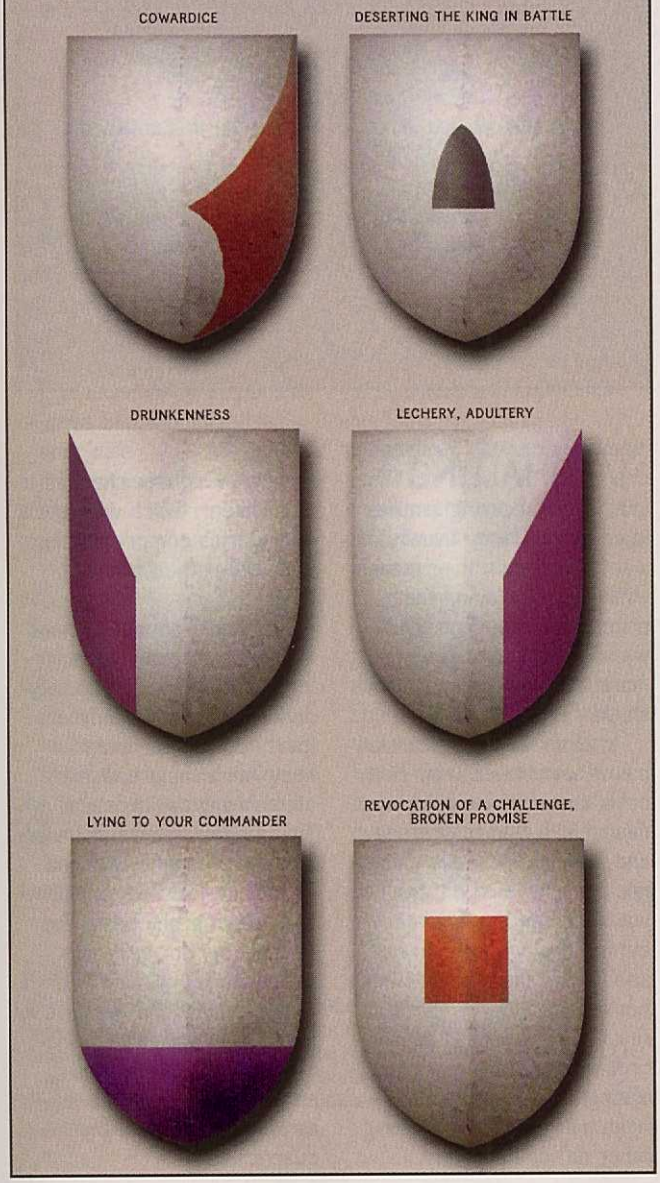


AUGMENTATIONS

When royalty felt it necessary to reward someone's notable or heroic deeds, they might be granted the right to bear arms. If the recipient was already an armiger, then the college of arms was commissioned to make an augmentation to their existing arms. This practice was notably cheaper than granting a piece of land or monetary reward, and politically safer than granting a royal title or membership to an order of chivalry.

The augmentation often took the form of a charge inserted into existing arms, or a bordure, canton, flaunches, or inescutcheon was added bearing a symbolic charge. Occasionally, an entirely new coat of arms was granted, alluding to the actions of the recipient. In some rarer cases, an escutcheon or quarter bearing the royal arms was granted.

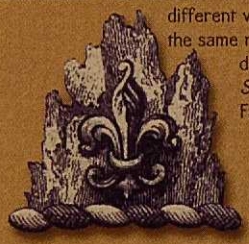
Abatements, continued



Leg
Symbolism: strength, stability, and expedition
Man
Variants: habited (wearing clothes); *savage* (naked); *armored* (dressed in armor)
Skulls
Symbolism: mortality
Thigh-bones (crossed)
Symbolism: mortality

FLORA

Fleur-de-lis
First used by King Louis VII (perhaps the name means "fleur de Louis"), the fleur-de-lis has been drawn many different ways over the centuries, but are called by the same name. The lily (*lis*) is drawn distinctly different than the fleur-de-lis.
Symbolism: most commonly represents France



Leaf
Common leaves are elm, hazel, oak, and strawberry; depicted in trefoil, quatrefoil, and cinquefoil arrangements.

Rose
The English hedgerow dog rose is generally used, bearing five leaves, thorns, and seeds.
Variants: seeded (seeds of a different tincture than the petals); *barbed* and *seeded proper* (green barbs and a gold center); *slipped and leaved proper* (green stem and leaves); *Rose of Lancaster* (red rose); *Rose of York* (white rose); *Tudor rose* (combined York and Lancaster roses in a double row of petals)
Symbolism: the seventh son; the Tudor royal family

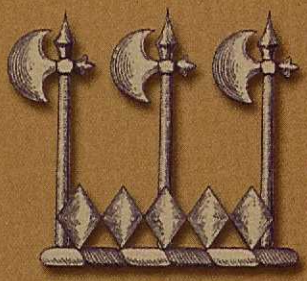
Thistle
Symbolism: badge of the Scottish sovereign

Tree Trunk
Oak, unless otherwise specified
Variants: raguly (ragged); *trunked* (a trunk of a different tincture than the branches); *acorned* (having acorns)
Symbolism: worthy of veneration

OBJECTS

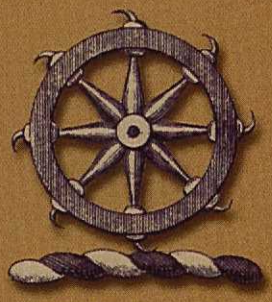
Anchor
Symbolism: great help when needed most; Christian symbol of hope
Annulet or Finger Ring
Symbolism: fidelity
Antlers
Variants: attires (antlers of a stag); *massacre* (when attached to a skullcap)
Symbolism: strength and fortitude

Arrows and Arrowheads
Variants: feathered (when the feathers are a different tincture than the shaft)
Symbolism: martial readiness
Axe
Symbolism: execution of military duty
Beacons or Cressets
Symbolism: one who defends the commonwealth or who gave the signal in time of danger



Bridge
Symbolism: a governor or magistrate
Book
Variants: edged (the page edges); *bound* (the cover and binding); *clasped* (having a lock or clasp)
Symbolism: one who is educated
Buckles
Symbolism: victorious loyalty in authority

Cannons and Cannon Balls
Symbolism: bestowed on those who faced their terrors in sieges and battles
Catharine Wheel, Pinwheel
Symbolism: prepared to undergo great trials for the (Christian) faith
Chains
Symbolism: a reward for acceptable or weighty service
Crown
Symbolism: royal or seigniorial authority



Cubes, squares, or dice
Symbolism: constancy, wisdom, verity, probity, and equity
Escallop Shell
Symbolism: one who has made long journeys to far countries; one who has had considerable naval command or gained great victories at sea

Feathers (usually ostrich)
Variants: quilled (a quill of a different tincture than the rest)
Symbolism: willing obedience and serenity
Fire
Symbolism: zeal
Fusil or Spindle of Yarn
Symbolism: negotiation

Gauntlet
Symbolism: representing a man armed and ready to fight
Harp
Symbolism: contemplation
Horns
Symbolism: strength and fortitude

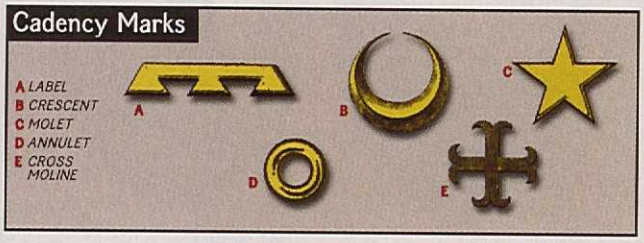
Horseshoe
Symbolism: good luck
Hunting Horn
Symbolism: one who is fond of lofty pursuits
Inkhorn
Symbolism: the art of writing and learned activities

Lightning and Thunderbolt
Traditionally, a bolt appears twisted and pale, inflamed at the ends, surmounting two jagged darts in saltire, or between two wings displayed, and often with fire emanating from the center.
Symbolism: carrying out important business with great clarity and force
Lyre
Symbolism: contemplation

DIFFERENCING AND CADENCY

When branches of a family, or two armingers, had identical arms, they needed to make them different from one another to avoid confusion. To achieve this, the heralds made changes to the arms to distinguish the separate parties. Similarly, the sons of the arms bearer, by order of birth, marked their personal arms to distinguish them from their father's. Cadency, as this differentiation was called, often became the differencing used between the families of the sons of an arminger.

The cadency marks for the first nine sons are as follows:
LABEL [first son] (removed after the father's death; a label argent was reserved for the Crown Prince)
CRESCENT [second son]
MOLET [third son]
MARTLET [fourth son] (a bird with feathers for feet, see the first illustration in the sidebar on page 57)
ANNULET [fifth son]
FLEUR-DE-LIS [sixth son] (see the second illustration in the sidebar on page 59)
ROSE [seventh son] (see the third illustration in the sidebar on page 59)
CROSS MOLINE [eigth son]
DOUBLE QUATREFOIL [ninth son] (not illustrated; eight leaf-shapes arranged in a circle, tips outward)



MARSHALLING

When arms bearing families intermarried, they usually wanted to retain their arms while also displaying the arms of their spouse. This was done by arranging, or marshalling, the arms on one shield.

In early times, all the elements were taken from both arms and combined into a new shield. Due to confusion and the lack of family identities being carried on, this was replaced by dimidation—cutting the two arms in half and joining the man's dexter portion with the woman's sinister portion. This caused problems, however, when distinguishing half a bend from half a chevron (among other difficulties). This practice was later changed to impalement, which used the entire arms compressed into one half of the final coat of arms.

The most popular method used today is called quartering, where a shield is initially divided into four quadrants (party per cross) and the complete arms are distributed among the quarters. The quadrants are numbered, from left to right: first and second in the chief, and third and fourth in the base. The man's arms normally was placed in the first and fourth quarters, with the woman's in the second and third. Today, marshaling is performed in one of two ways, either through impalement or quartering.

Coat of Arms Example

EXAMPLE

Imagine your cleric or paladin serves a king in a holy war and distiguishes himself by nearly single-handedly defending a great temple. He is granted nobility and a coat of arms blazoned like this:

per pale

to represent his military actions

argent

to show his wish for peace

and sable

representing his grief for those who lost their lives in the war

a bend sisnister

symbolizing his defense of the innocent (those taking refuge in the temple)

counter-changed

this describes how the pale and the field switch tincture across the party per pale line

two Catherine wheels or

symbolizing his willingness to sacrifice and suffer for his faith

and two Catherine wheels gules

to represent what he has already suffered for his faith in battle

A coat of arms can be granted during play (as in the example above) or your character could carry one that has been held by her family for generations. In eiether case, heraldry is a great way to lend a sense of history and detail to any campaign.

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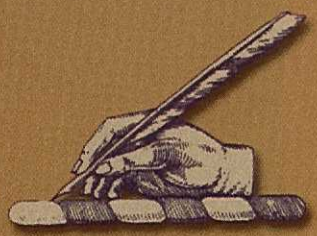
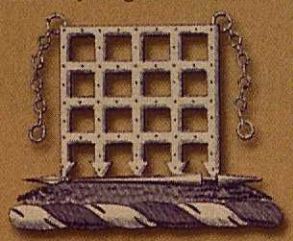
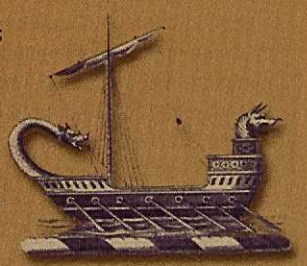
Millstone
Symbolism: the mutual interaction of human society
Moon
Variants: plenitude (full moon)
Symbolism: tranquil power over mundane actions
Moon (Crescent)
Variants: cressent ("horns" pointing to the chief); *increscent* ("horns" pointing to the dexter); *decrescent* ("horns" pointing to the sinister)
Symbolism: one who has been enlightened and honored by the gracious aspect of his sovereign



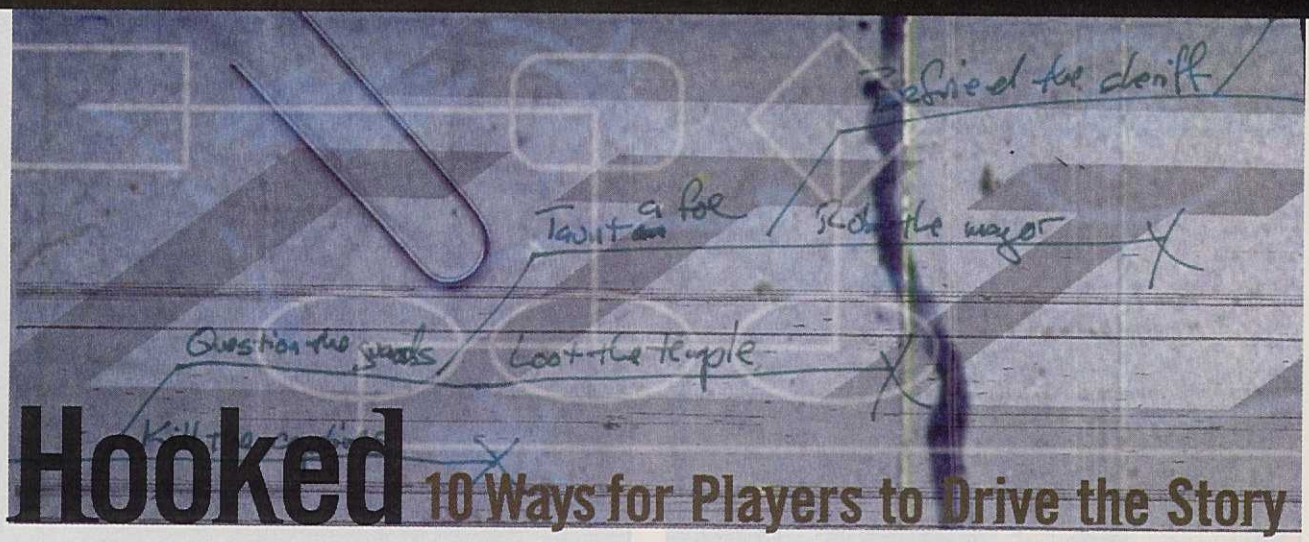


Pen
Symbolism: the art of writing and learned activities
Pillar or Column
Symbolism: fortitude and constancy
Portcullis
Symbolism: effectual protection in emergency
Purse
Symbolism: a frank and liberal steward
Rocks
Symbolism: refuge and protection
Saddles, Stirrups, and Spurs
Symbolism: preparedness for active service
Scaling Ladder
Symbolism: one who was fearless in an assault
Scepter
Symbolism: justice
Scythe and Sickle
Symbolism: hope for a bountiful harvest; of things hoped for
Shells
Symbolism: the protection of divine direction

Shield
Symbolism: a defender
Ship
Symbolism: a notable expedition by sea
Spear Heads
Symbolism: agile comprehension of important matters
Spear or Lance
Symbolism: knightly service; devotion to honor
Spur
Symbolism: gold (dignity of knighthood); silver (an esquire)
Sun
Variants: radiant (giving light); in splendor (with a human face)
Symbolism: glory and splendor
Sword
Symbolism: pursuit of honor and virtue in battle
Tower or Castle
Symbolism: Grandeur and solidity. Sometimes granted to someone who has captured one



Trident
Symbolism: maritime dominion
Trumpet
Symbolism: ready for the battle
Wheel
Symbolism: fortune
Wings
Symbolism: celebrity; sometimes protection



Hooked

10 Ways for Players to Drive the Story

by Robin D. Laws

After playing a few D&D sessions, you're used to the relationship between the players and the DM. The DM controls the setting and the general direction of the story; you and the other players follow her lead. A couple of times, the campaign looked like it was going to go in a direction you really liked. But instead those plot threads went ignored, and you were a little disappointed. Not enough to complain, mind you—you know that your DM works hard to prepare each week's game sessions, and you wouldn't dream of criticizing. You certainly don't feel ready to take over her responsibilities—at least, not for now—so you've got to accept that the story isn't always going to go the way you really want it to.

Or do you? Chances are, your DM would love some direction from the players as to where to take the story. After all, she wants you all to have a good time or she wouldn't be putting in the work. She likes it when you take the story in a direction that surprises her. After all, she knows all the secrets, so the only suspense she gets to feel is when the PCs do something unexpected. She probably wishes you'd take a more active role in shaping the story.

Without stepping out of your role as a player character, you can create characters, or add detail to existing ones, in ways that show the DM where you want the story to go. By creating a backstory, or hook, for your character, you suggest a conflict that can be developed through the course of the story.

Useful Jargon

"Backstory" and "hook" are jargon terms used by screenwriters and other creators of genre fiction. A character's backstory is the collection of important events that happened to the character before the story began. In a TV show or movie, we can only learn the character's backstory through dialogue or flashbacks. In dialogue, a character tells us what happened in the character's past. In a flashback, we see it happen. In a novel or short story, we can learn the character's backstory by following the character's thoughts. (This is called an internal monologue.)

In a roleplaying game, the DM and other players can really learn your backstory only if you talk about it during play. You can write up pages of backstory and hand them out for everyone to read, but how fun is that? How would the other PCs know all that stuff, anyhow? If you do like to write extensive character backgrounds, you might want to check back over them now and then to see how much of the material has actually made a difference in play. Make sure you're not going overboard with the backstory.

The most memorable characters are simple characters. The simple idea that keeps the character doing things and moving each episode of a continuing series forward is called the hook. In a D&D game, every character comes with a pre-existing hook: She wants to improve herself by accumulating experience, most often in a dungeon environment. You can make your PC stand out from the pack by adopting a second hook, such as one of those suggested here or a special one of your own creation.

1 The Quest

You have a specific task to fulfill. This task might have been assigned to you by a powerful NPC, such as a political leader, a religious figure, a revered high-level adventurer, the head of a guild, or a wealthy patron. You might even have received a divine vision from your god, commanding you to complete the task. In one classic variant of the quest, the hero must perform a test, or a series of tests, to win the hand of a lovely bride, usually a princess. (Since the role of the sexes is less restrictive in most D&D worlds than in the medieval period, you could just as well play a warrior woman seeking the hand of a princely bachelor.) Alternatively, you could play a character hoping to earn status as a nobleman, join an august organization of mighty heroes, or bring attention to a social or political cause. Perhaps the task at hand is a famous one that many previous heroes have unsuccessfully attempted; without taking orders from anyone, you aim to win fame and fortune by doing what no one else could.

The classic quest for this purpose is the attempt to find a legendary, lost item. This justifies your delving into one dungeon after another. Every time you crawl down into an underground complex, encounter vine-shrouded ruins in the wilderness, or storm an enemy keep, you're thinking that the item you've long sought might lie within.

By describing the nature of the item, you're telling the DM what kind of fabulous treasure you'd like your PC to find when he's done enough adventuring to deserve one. In exchange for some entertaining roleplaying, you get input into the sort of loot you'll eventually acquire.

This is not the only possible quest, though. You might be hunting for a piece of information vital to the survival of your people, searching for a long-lost person, or tracking a legendary monster you intend to slay. Mythology's classic series of quests, the twelve labors of Hercules, required him to slay 4 monsters, capture another 5 fabulous or fearsome beasts, steal 2 magic items from their divine owners, and—just for a change of pace—clean up the leavings of a stable full of magical rams. If your PC must, like Hercules, complete a number of tasks, he enters dungeons in hopes of finding the relics and monsters he's looking for. He might also go into the dungeon to improve himself enough to begin completing his tasks.

2 The Mission

You obsessively pursue an ongoing obligation. Unlike the questing hero, your mission will never be completely fulfilled. It usually pits you against a group of enemies. You might want to keep orcs from crossing a frontier, rain steely justice down on all criminals, or gain revenge against the barbarians who slew your family.

The advantage of this hook is that it's clear and simple. Some players like to play grim, obsessive PCs. However, you have to be careful to construct a mission that allows the character to make regular forays into the dungeon. You can't expect the rest of the group to spend all of its time patrolling a border or hunting fugitives. The old "I go into the dungeon to strengthen myself for my real mission" justification works, if your DM is willing to allow you the occasional adventure in which you pursue your goal. Otherwise, you should come up with a mission that requires you to go into dungeons on a regular basis. Perhaps the border you're patrolling is a dungeon itself; you're stopping monsters from invading from below. Maybe dungeons in your neck of the woods are packed with escaped criminals or serve as hideouts for the tribe that killed your relatives.

3 Atonement

You once did something terrible that you hope to atone for. You trudge down into the dungeon to confront evil. You prove your dedication by braving its dangers and suffering its unpleasant conditions. You either grimly refuse to even hint at the dark deeds that now drive you, or you compulsively confess your past perfidy to anyone who gets within earshot. Although you'll tackle any intensely hazardous situation in the pursuit of redemption, you become especially agitated when events echo your dark secret. For example, if you failed to rescue a friend, you'll now risk anything to save endangered companions. If you killed someone during a burglary, you'll obsessively hunt down any robbers you come across—maybe to turn them in, or perhaps to convert them to your cause.

4 Nemesis

Your destiny is inextricably meshed with that of a powerful and resourceful enemy. You search tirelessly for a way to thwart your foe. Maybe you simply want to become powerful enough to challenge him to a one-on-one battle. Perhaps you need to recruit heroes and followers for a major assault on his stronghold. More likely, he fled the scene of his crimes, forcing you to hunt for him. You've joined an adventuring band in hopes of finding clues that will lead you to your foe. You think he might be hiding out in a dungeon, or perhaps you know that he's searching for an item of great evil that he intends to use to conquer a kingdom or flood the world with unholy energies. Maybe your adversary is recruiting monsters and bandits to serve his cause. At any rate, you pick up his trail wherever you can find it. Sometimes you find and clash with your nemesis, who displays an infuriating talent for last-minute escapes. On other occasions, you get captured but manage to escape from your foe's clutches in turn.

Your backstory might include a scene in which the enemy did something terrible to you, or perhaps you bear a sense of responsibility for your foe's actions. Maybe he was once a close friend or relative of your character. If you have an appetite for really thorny complications—and a true devotion to time-honored action-adventure cliches—he could even be your PC's evil twin.

CHANCES ARE, YOUR DM WOULD LOVE SOME DIRECTION FROM THE PLAYERS AS TO WHERE TO TAKE THE STORY.

Getting DM Approval

When you create your hook and backstory, you'll inevitably find yourself making up details of the DM's world. For example, if you want your character to burn with the ambition to head a college of magic, you might have to invent that college. You probably also want to name and describe the officious wizard who refused to let you sit for the entrance exam. That scene also suggests the operational details of the college—it has entrance exams, for example. Since the creation of institutions, NPCs, and world details are all the province of the DM, you need to get approval for your backstory. You might want to consult her before you start; she might have already done your work for you by inventing a college of magic that would suit you just fine. She might ask you to incorporate certain details that dovetail your backstory with her pre-existing plans for a big plotline, or you might have to abandon particular ideas altogether. Maybe she's decided that magic is not openly encouraged in this corner of her world, and that the college of magic was forcibly disbanded years ago. Your DM always has final say in such matters. Still, she'll probably work with you to alter your original idea to fit her setting.

Keeping it Fresh

The DM's challenge is to add a new twist to the story each time she brings your character hook into a session. Let's go back to the evil twin example. The first time he appears, it's enough to have him show up and wreak havoc, surprising everybody with the fact that you even have an evil twin. The next time, the twin must do something different.

The DM needs a twist. Perhaps the twin's in trouble, and the PCs find that they have to extricate him from it in order to achieve their own goals. The third time the twin appears, the twist might be an alliance with a villain from another PC's hook: The two troublemakers have banded together to harass the party. For this reason, you should keep your backstory as simple and open as possible. The less detail you establish from the start, the more room the DM has to surprise you with new variations on your basic idea.

Your relations with fellow party members might suffer when your enemy takes one of them hostage in order to lure you into a trap. They might come to hate your nemesis as much as you do and share your passionate belief that he ought to be dead, and soon. Or they might just want to get away from him.

Because this hook can so easily cause problems for other PCs, make sure that your fellow players aren't annoyed by it. If your DM focuses on your character and his hook to the exclusion of the others, do what you can to draw them into the story. If you can't, suggest to the DM that you take a break from your storyline to explore theirs, or simply devote a few sessions to simple exploration.

THE MORE DEAD ADVENTURERS WHO ONCE TROD THE PATH TO A PARTICULAR SITE, THE BETTER.

5 The Curse

Your character is the victim of a terrible curse. The curse might be centered on you as an individual: You might have suffered a terrible disfigurement or lost your ability to speak; you might lose control of your actions for prolonged periods; you might even turn into a monster under certain conditions. (You'll have to work out the details of this last choice with your DM. She'll make sure that you don't create a curse that gives you extra cool powers to outdo your fellow players.) Alternatively, the curse might center on your community or loved ones: Perhaps your betrothed lies in a wakeless sleep, your home village stands frozen in time under a magical dome, or your family can no longer perceive you and thinks you're dead.

You know that there must be a countermeasure to the curse out there somewhere. Maybe the creature or magician who cursed you told you so, having hidden the cure in an undisclosed location. Even more likely, you know that the dungeons of the world contain all manner of mysterious things, and that somewhere in one of them there must be a way to reverse the curse. A *wish* might do the trick if nothing else does. You want to either find an item such as a *ring of three wishes* or prove yourself worthy to a powerful wizard who can lift the curse in exchange for a service.

6 Fighting To Forget

You adventure in order to forget a past heartache. However, the moments of pure concentration, in which the danger of imminent death focuses the mind entirely on the present, are still too few and far between. Most of the time, you can't help but brood. You forever revisit the fateful moment that drove you to abandon your home and pursue a life of reckless adventure.

You might have been spurned by your one true love. Maybe you endured a shameful condition, such as slavery. Perhaps you were publicly humiliated in some way—beaten by a rival in full view of your community. Perhaps you were betrayed by someone you thought you could trust. A business partner might have cheated you out of your life savings, or the leader you valiantly fought for turned out to be a coward or a villain.

Whatever the cause of your present embittered attitude, you can't go back and undo the past events. Maybe you took revenge on the one who wronged you, but found it wasn't enough. Perhaps there was no way to make things right without doing a greater wrong.

Others forget by drowning themselves in ale or wandering. You tried those methods, and they didn't work. Only the repeated threat of death was enough to allow you to forget, even for an instant, so you became an adventurer.

Still, your old life periodically comes back to haunt you. Sometimes you find yourself in situations that echo the great traumatic event that sent you on the road. You might encounter a woman who bears a striking resemblance to the lover who wronged you, or see that the partner who betrayed you has expanded

Don't Hog the Spotlight

Don't expect your chosen character hook to come into play every session. Most of the time, you'll be engaging in the standard adventurer activity for your DM's campaign—probably dungeon exploration. Your hook comes into play only every so often, as a change of pace that heightens the excitement of the game. Look at the Fox Mulder character on *The X-Files* TV show; his hook is that he's looking for his kidnapped sister. (It falls into the category we call "The Mission.") During most episodes he engages in his standard activity: the investigation of unconnected paranormal events. Only once or twice a season does Mulder's sister come into the story. Likewise, if you have an evil twin, he'd get boring awfully fast if he popped up in every single adventure. Each of his reappearances should come as a surprise to you and the other players. Also, because there is more than one PC, every player should patiently wait his turn for his character hook to come into play. The PCs should all be willing to help their friends follow their motivations. The group might help Othon the Wise lobby for the chancellor's post one day, and join together to track down the gnome who killed Athaladriel's parents the next.

his mercantile empire even to the fringes of your homeland. When these things happen, you can't help but be drawn in despite yourself, as you're driven by the vain hope that you can reverse and replay the fateful moment that changed your life forever.

7 To Restore Your Reputation

You have been falsely accused of a shameful act. Everyone at home thinks you're a criminal or coward. You've tried to directly disprove the charges against you, to no avail. Instead, by establishing a reputation as a great hero, you mean to show them how wrong they were about you. Then they'll have no choice but to look at the things they said, and compare them against your grand and glorious deeds. Only then will you be able to hold your head up high among the family members who raised you and the community that gave you a home.

You weigh the danger of any dungeon against its potential for winning you fame and admiration. Little kobold warrens out in the middle of nowhere mean nothing to you. You want to storm the most feared, notorious crypts and strongholds in the realm. The more dead adventurers who once trod the path to a particular site, the better. The bolder your actions, the more quickly you'll erase the untrue taint that is now attached to your name.

8 Lost Love

You fell in love with an adventurer and now seek her in the dungeons and wilderness. Maybe you're adventuring to reach her level of power, so as to be a true match for her when you make your pledge of eternal love. Perhaps she's gone missing, and you hope against hope to find her in a prison cell or magical trap. You might or might not know how she felt about you. Maybe she returned your love, but duty prevented her from staying at your side. It's also possible that your feelings for her are completely unrequited. But one thing is certain: The only way to find out for sure is to find her again, and do whatever is necessary to be with her forever.

9 Disinherited

You were the heir to a great fortune, vast tract of land, hereditary title, or family business. Maybe you were a sorcerer's favored apprentice, sure to inherit his secret spellbooks and trove of relics. Perhaps you expected to take over a gang of thieves when the boss you faithfully served met his final reward. Whatever you expected, you didn't get it. Someone else stepped in to snatch the prize from you. Maybe the father or mentor you thought you'd inherit everything from cast you out. Maybe you deserved to be cut off, and maybe not. Whatever the situation, you now have nothing to show for your years of faithful waiting.

You became an adventurer because you saw no other way to build a substitute for the thing you expected to receive. You wanted the life mapped out for you, and you are willing to risk death or injury to get it. You'll find enough treasure to eclipse your hereditary fortune, buy an estate twice as big as the one you expected, or set up a firm to rival the family enterprise, driving it into the ground. You'll discover twice as many obscure spells than your former master had in his spellbook or equip yourself with enough magic weapons to fight off your old gang singlehandedly.

Even if you do recreate the thing you lost, you might then find that it's easier to build an empire than to keep it. At least you'll have become the man you were always meant to be.

10 Ambition

You want to rule over others. This is not necessarily an ignoble ambition; you might become a good king who brings light to a kingdom that suffers from dark oppression. You might enact laws that usher in a new standard for justice and freedom. You could save your people from the enemies that threaten them. You could erect temples to the gods of virtue, found universities to serve as beacons of knowledge, and foster trade between nations, lifting your people from miserable poverty.

First you'll have to prove yourself. You'll need money to finance your regime and a record of great deeds to compensate for your rustic background. Before you can command many, you must learn to lead a few. You'll go adventuring in search of loot, a legend, and a ragtag band of followers you can build into the kernel of an army.

This character hook can keep you going for years of adventure before the DM must deal with your political ambitions. It forms a great basis for high-level play. Other PCs, as members of your inner circle, will find plenty to do while you build your power base. Still, as they work to make you king, they'll have time to pursue the character hooks that drive them.

LOOK AT THE FOX MULDER CHARACTER ON *THE X-FILES* TV SHOW; HIS HOOK IS THAT HE'S LOOKING FOR HIS KIDNAPPED SISTER.

Creating a Hook in Mid-Game

You don't have to start out with a character hook. Sometimes you'll have more fun if you let one develop during play. The advantage of a hook developed during play is that the DM doesn't have to work to fit your idea into hers. Take an idea she introduces and build on it.

For example, your PC might become obsessed with researching the past of an interesting magic item he discovers in a dungeon. He might talk incessantly about his find, making it the thing most people associate with him. His desire to find out more about the item gives him a motivation that your DM can build adventures around. Perhaps, in the course of his research, he finds out that a great hero once owned the item. He could even rename himself after the hero. By doing this, you're saying to your DM that you want adventures that revolve around your magic item. Consequently, your DM might have evildoers steal your item, motivating a quest to get it back. Or maybe the legendary hero after whom you've named yourself comes back and isn't flattered by your adoption of his name....

The Definitive D&D Soundtrack

by Mike Selinker

One by one, the tremulous adventurers hazard the rickety bridge of bones to the lair of Azzathor the Lichlord. Fearing eldritch blasts of necromatic magic, the party brandishes steel and sorcery as they approach the door on the other side. Crashing through, they awaken a legion of vampires whose fangs glisten with blood. And at this moment of terror, over the radio comes:

"If you wannabe my lover
You gotta get with my friends...."

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Wait, wait. You can't have that. This is DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, not Swords & Spice Girls! If you want music in the background for your game, you need to put some effort into it. The right music makes the mood of your game, but the wrong music breaks it.

This article covers a wide range of music that can enliven your D&D game. While some of it will be familiar, you might need to scour the record stores to find the others. All of it can give your roleplaying session that added edge.

First, trim your CD collection down to the essentials. For D&D mood-setting, you can remove all swing, pre-1960s rock-n-roll, Christmas, country and western, R&B, reggae, and bubblegum pop albums. Not that those are bad albums, mind you, but D&D doesn't handle those sounds too well. (Of course, this is only my opinion, and like all opinions, it should be weighed against your own before being followed. If you want Lawrence Welk's *Pick-a-Polka!* filtering through your game session, have at it.)

The basics of a D&D soundtrack should come from five categories of music: rock, Celtic melodies, instrumentals, classical, and the all-important soundtrack albums.

ROCK MUSIC

Starting in the late '60s, rock rediscovered the sounds of medieval days and bent them to its will. The combination works well to back up any D&D game.

The first and best rock albums to capture a medieval theme came from Led Zeppelin. When Robert Plant sings of "the darkened depths of Mordor" or Jimmy Page dives into the hypnotic guitar signature of "Kashmir," your scene is set. The middle two discs of the remastered Led Zeppelin box set are sure bets, as is any album from *III* to *Houses of the Holy*.

Once down this road, you'll want to sample Emerson, Lake, and Palmer, especially their takes on classical tunes (but you're better off with the originals, as we'll discuss later). Queen produced some good music for a D&D game; many players swear by the *Highlander* and *Flash Gordon* soundtracks, for example. Jethro Tull is also good if you don't mind the background music being a bit trippy. Ditto for The Alan Parsons Project.

Stevie Nicks isn't called "the White Witch" for nothing. Her solo albums such as *Bella Donna* and *Enchanted*, as well as certain Fleetwood Mac songs like "Rhiannon," make for a good, if possibly

too familiar, backdrop for magical scenarios.

When things get violent, very little beats carefully selected heavy metal. Most heavy metal devolves into salacious subject matter, and that's probably not what you're looking for in your game, but Queensryche's *Empire* and *Operation Mindcrime* stick to the good stuff: powerful rock and roll with themes of violence and chaos—you know, like your game.

Blue Oyster Cult hits some of the fantasy genre high notes, especially on the Michael Moorcock-penned "Black Blade" (based on Moorcock's Elric of Melnibone series). Ozzy Osbourne, both with Black Sabbath and the *Blizzard of Ozz*, explored some fairly dark subject matter in songs like "Paranoid" and "Iron Man." In the same vein, you might also play some Judas Priest or Alice Cooper.

I'm more likely to play some thunderous alternative rock, though. White Zombie, Korn, Rage Against the Machine, Ministry, and Limp Bizkit all have the straight-ahead power of heavy metal, but with more of a razor edge. There's little in their lyrics that contributes to the D&D mood, but chances are you can't understand the lyrics anyway.

On the other hand, you might want more of a sense of loss and desperation in your D&D music. In that case, Nine Inch Nails' pounding *Pretty Hate Machine* might be a good choice. Also excellent for creepy adventures is The Cure's *Disintegration*, featuring disturbing lyrics like "On candy-striped legs, the spider-man comes ..." If that mood thrills you, you can go deeper into Goth and dark wave with Switchblade Symphony, the Cocteau Twins, Faith and the Muse, and Lycia. All of these give your game a morbid theme of uncertainty.

It's not perfect for all groups, but I'm partial to the occasional rap album to back up a particularly high-power game. The Wu-Tang Clan's *Wu-Tang Forever* has some strong language throughout, but the album powers ahead and gets your blood pumping. Besides, the band members turn into swarms of bees in one video, and who wouldn't want that?

Lastly, I must recommend the goofy thrash of GWAR, just about the best band of roleplaying game fanatics there is. GWAR dresses in oversized armor that even 3rd Edition fighters couldn't wear, fires multihued liquids out among their fans, and sings about mayhem, mayhem, and more mayhem. If there ever was a band that came from D&D, it's GWAR.

Celtic Melodies

Shifting gears entirely, I find that some of the best music for a fantasy game evokes the magical environments in which the game takes place. For that, you can't do better than folk-rock bands and ethereal voiced singers, many influenced by Celtic music.

My favorite such music is that of Fairport Convention, a legendary English folk-rock group featuring guitar virtuoso Richard Thompson. Their jangly, rocking versions of centuries-old tunes like "Matty Groves" and "Reynardine" make for intensely appropriate sounds for your game. Try to find the classic albums *Liege and Lief* and *Unhalfbricking*, or start with the recent greatest hits collection *Meeting on the Ledge*.

The Chieftains are a bit more traditional, sounding bodhrans and panflutes along with the occasional electric guitar. This Celtic big band performs songs with titles like "The March Of Laois Ruari Og O Mordha: Air." A mouthful for anyone not of Gaelic descent, but trust me, it works. Start with the 1992 *Best of the Chieftains* collection, then move on to similar groups such as the New Christy Minstrels and the delightfully dubbed Silly Wizard.

A more modern take is that of Loreena McKennitt, maybe the only artist to title an album with the name of a D&D monster (*Elemental*). All of her albums are good choices for a game, but McKennitt's 1997 album, *The Book of Secrets*, might be the best. Songs like "The Mummer's Dance," "Night Ride Across the Caucasus," and her adaptation of Alfred Noyes's poem "The Highwayman" suggest a trip to a magical place.

Along the same lines are the light melodies of Enya. Her album *The Memory of Trees* has lyrics like "I walk the maze of moments/but everywhere I turn to/begins a new beginning/but cannot find a finish"—perfect for when your characters are trapped in a labyrinthine dungeon. Along these lines, pick up Clannad's *Anam*, Capercaillie's *Beautiful Wasteland*, and the *Celtic Moods* series.

But let's say you've set your game in a little more rough and tumble environment than Enya might call for. Then you need The Pogues. Singer Shane McGowan's raspy voice contrasts with singers Caitlin O'Riordan and Kirsty McColl on now-classic albums *Red Roses for Me* and *If I Should Fall From Grace With God*. Play the latter album's track "Turkish Song of the Damned" if you want to terrify your players with a fate worse than death.

The first and best rock albums to capture a medieval theme came from Led Zeppelin.

To conjure a medieval marketplace, you'll want just a singer or duo performing songs of the era. My favorite such duo is Molly & the Tinker. You'll have trouble finding their albums, but it's worth the effort. On the one hand you get ribald rousers like "Bosun's Bouncing Boy," and on the other you get heartfelt melodies like "Go Lassie Go." If you can't find their albums, don't fret, because there are as many such singers as there are Renaissance fairs.

Then, of course, there's the music from the Riverdance show. It's good Irish-tinged music, but you might not want your players tapping their feet that much ...

Instrumentals

You might find that the best rock music to weave into your game is instrumental. Such albums keep the mood alive without the distracting vocals.

Acoustic guitar instrumentals à la Andrés Segovia are particularly good for evoking medieval life. For electric guitars, I'm partial to the stylings of Joe Satriani. Hard-driving chase sequences can easily be filled out by his sci-fi influenced rock.

Nearly any Tangerine Dream album is also good for this purpose. So ambient they're almost subliminal, Tangerine Dream frequently explores fantasy themes on albums like *Le Parc* and *Hyperborea*. On *Goblin's Club*, for example, there are songs with titles like "Elf June and the Midnight Patrol" and "Sad Merlin's Sunday."

Enigma combines pseudo-Gregorian chanting with synthesizer music to create an airy soundtrack perfect for elf strongholds and cloud giant kingdoms. The album *MCMXC A.D.* gives your players a chance to journey amid "The Rivers of Belief"—assuming they don't mind being led there by a songwriter named Curly M.C.

In a woodland or jungle setting, playing the Deep Forest albums will both get your players in the mood and put them on edge. Yes, it's relaxing, but the message that there are other denizens in the green will not be lost on the interlopers.

Composer Philip Glass makes music that is anything but relaxing, but somehow tempo-challenged tone poems like "Koyaanisqatsi" make for haunting D&D scores. For that matter, you might wish to bypass music entirely and seek out those old K-Tel albums of nothing but scary sounds when you run your next haunted house adventure.

Even better is the industrial/dark ambient movement, especially records by Delerium. Their early albums such as *Morpheus* are good for creating an off-kilter and ethereal mood, though the more lyrical albums like *Karma* also hold up. If this works for you, try Frontline Assembly, Synaesthesia, and KMFDM.

Along the same line, the "band" Einstürzende Neubauten's albums make a perfect soundtrack if your PCs enter a dwarven mine or artificer's lab. That's because Neubauten pounds on various metal implements with various other metal implements to make a clanging cacophony. Their work is oddly melodic. (A less headache-inspiring sound for such settings might be the Art of Noise's early maxi-singles, such as "Close to the Edit.")

A surprising source for great background instrumentals is video and computer games. Set up *Diablo* on your PlayStation and pause it. The creepy background track will play over and over, perfect for putting your players in the mindset that they're in the dungeon. (Obviously, this is especially good when you play the D&D/*Diablo* crossover adventures, such as *Diablo II: The Awakening*.) Other electronic games with great background music for D&D are *Warcraft*, *Age of Empires*, and not surprisingly, *Baldur's Gate*.

A surprising source for great background instrumentals is video and computer games.

Classical Music

Pretty much any classical music—Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, you name it—makes for good subliminal noise for a D&D game. That's why they call it classical.

The King Kong of all D&D campaign scores is Richard Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*, the most bombastic music ever composed. When "Flight of the Valkyries" plays, everyone knows it's combat time. You can hear the dwarves, giants, barbarians, and gods clash with every note. Besides, at four full dramas, it's about the only soundtrack that could last for an all-night session of *Against the Giants*. Just don't be surprised if your players start singing "Kill da wabbit, kill da wabbit ...." (Don't stop with *Ring of the Nibelung*, though. *Tristan and Isolde* and *Faust*, among others, are operas that are just as appropriate for the gaming table.)

Close behind Wagner for D&D relevance is Modest Moussorgsky's "Night on Bald Mountain." As in the climactic demon-raising in *Fantasia*, "Night on Bald Mountain" is perfect for building tension around terrors from the outer planes. Play this, and the characters won't summon anything cavalierly. Quite often, this piece is coupled with his *Pictures at an Exhibition*, which evokes a dank, old castle and wars of state in Russia at the time of Baba Yaga.

When you want to focus on knights and tournaments, little compares to Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* (otherwise known as the cool music from *Excalibur*). Lots of grand chorales, martial drums, and chanting in foreign languages makes for a stately backdrop to your game.

Similarly, Austrian composer Franz von Suppé gives the perfect call to war in his "Light Cavalry March." Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man" can serve a similar purpose, but it is probably too familiar to work in most campaigns.

If you've ever wondered where the Klingons get their soundtrack, you should put on *The Planets* by Gustav Holst. The "Mars, the Bringer of War" portion works especially well to evoke the perils and triumphs of combat and exploration. Don't turn the CD off there, though, because the "Uranus, the Magician" section is both sprightly and dark enough to conjure images of a mage toying with dangerous forces.

When your game enters a quieter phase, both Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and Antonio Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* tell your players that everything is all right—at first. Both get a lot more chaotic, which is often how adventures go: first the calm, then the storm.

Gregorian chants are not everyone's cup of gruel, but if you set an adventure in a monastery or temple, you should play the Benedictine Monks of Santo de Silos' *Chant* in the background. *Chant* evokes feelings of reverence in your players, if nothing else.

For an adventure involving genies and magic, try *Scheherazade*, a symphonic suite by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Based on the *Arabian Nights* story of the harem girl who regales her sultan with tales so that he spares her life, the bedouin-influenced *Scheherazade* dances around many moods, and each is good to use for an encounter.

Finally, there's Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Nearly anything by Mozart can supplement a D&D game, but the most purposeful is his *Requiem*. If you ever want to convince your players that things are bleaker than they think they are, this is the music for you.

Soundtracks

This is the motherlode. TV and movie soundtracks are perfect RPG scores, as they often have a beginning, middle, and an end. I'd avoid soundtracks with lots of

Source	Recommended Work	Battle	Dungeon	Sorcery	Town	Laboratory	Temple	Wilderness	Hell
AC/DC	Highway to Hell, Back in Black								
Age of Empires	Game sounds								
Alan Parsons Project	Eye in the Sky, Turn of a Friendly Card								
Aliens	Soundtrack								
Apollo 13	Soundtrack								
Arlington Road	Soundtrack								
Army of Darkness	Soundtrack								
Art of Noise	Who's Afraid of? (The Art of Noise!)								
Baldur's Gate	Game sounds								
Batman	Soundtrack								
Benedictine Monks of Santo de Silos	Chant								
Birdy	Soundtrack								
Black Sabbath	Paranoid, Black Sabbath								
Blade Runner	Soundtrack								
Blue Oyster Cult	Spectres, Agents of Fortune								
Bram Stoker's Dracula	Soundtrack								
Braveheart	Soundtrack								
Capercaillie	Beautiful Wasteland								
Celtic Moods	Celtic Moods I & II								
The Chieftains	Best of the Chieftains								
Clannad	Anam								
Cocteau Twins	Treasure, The CD Single Box Set								
Conan the Barbarian	Soundtrack								
Cooper, Alice	Love it to Death, Welcome to my Nightmare								
Copland, Aaron	"Fanfare for the Common Man"								
Crimson Tide	Soundtrack								
The Crow	Soundtrack								
Crystal Method	Vegas								
The Cure	Disintegration								
Darkman	Soundtrack								
Deep Forest	Deep Forest								
Delerium	Karma, Morpheus								
Diablo	Game sounds								
Einstürzende Neubauten	Five on the Open-Ended Richter								
Emerson, Lake, and Palmer	Brain Salad Surgery, Pictures at an Exhibition								
Enigma	MCMXC A.D.								
Enya	The Memory of Trees, Shepherd Moons								
The Exorcist	Soundtrack								
Fairport Convention	Liege and Lief, Unhalfbricking								
Faith and the Muse	Elyria, Annwyn Beneath the Waves								
Fantasia	Soundtrack								
Fleetwood Mac	Rumours, Tusk								
Front Line Assembly	Total Terror								
Ghost in the Shell	Soundtrack								
Gladiator	Soundtrack								
Glass, Philip	Koyaanisqatsi								
Glory	Soundtrack								
GWAR	Scumdogs of the Universe, We Kill Everything								
Hamlet	Soundtrack								
Heavy Metal	Soundtrack								
Holst, Gustav	The Planets								
The Hunt for Red October	Soundtrack								
Interview with the Vampire	Soundtrack								
Jethro Tull	Aqualung, Thick as a Brick, Songs from the Wood								
Judas Priest	Screaming for Vengeance, Hell Bent for Leather								
Jurassic Park	Soundtrack								
KMFDM	Virus, Money								
Korn	Follow the Leader, Issues								
Krull	Soundtrack								
Labyrinth	Soundtrack								
Ladyhawke	Soundtrack								
The Last of the Mohicans	Soundtrack								
Led Zeppelin	Houses of the Holy, III, Physical Graffiti								
Legend	Soundtrack								
Limp Bizkit	Significant Other								

different artists, as the best for gaming are usually original score compilations. In other words: *Krull* yes, *Footloose* no.

Maybe the best D&D music ever comes from Basil Poledouris's soundtrack for *Conan the Barbarian*. Every player of a fighter or barbarian wants to be Arnold. If you play this, they will be. Of course, if you play it, don't expect them to find diplomatic solutions to problems. The *Gladiator* soundtrack can do the same, though players might be more tempted to rally an army around them or call out the villian for a showdown in classic Hollywood fashion.

You can get a similar effect from Poledouris's *The Hunt for Red October*. It features a Russian martial chorus, just about as bold a call to action as there could be.

Maybe the best D&D music ever comes from Basil Poledouris's soundtrack for *Conan the Barbarian.*

A sampler of D&D-related classical music can be found on the *Fantasia* soundtrack. Our association of Paul Dukas's "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" with animated broomsticks is so deeply rooted that playing the soundtrack might get the wizards in your group casting spells left and right. From the centaurs in Beethoven's "Pastoral Symphony" to the aforementioned demon of "Night on Bald Mountain," this soundtrack evokes the film's images that are burned into your players' brains.

When you want to convince your players that things just aren't right, put on the *Aliens* soundtrack, which is great music for a dungeoncrawl. Along with *Aliens*, many other James Horner soundtracks make solid adventure music. *Braveheart*, *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, *The Mask of Zorro*, *Willow*, *Patriot Games*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, *Sneakers*, *Glory*, *The Rocketeer*, and even *Titanic* (minus the grating Celine Dion song) work well here.

When composer and Oingo Boingo leader Danny Elfman isn't being kooky, he can create a very involving soundtrack. His instrumental scores for *Batman*, *Darkman*, and especially *Army of Darkness* all create moods of being both playful and frightening.

Don't use *Chariots of Fire* unless you want lots of running in your game, but another Vangelis soundtrack is great for your game. Like the original film, Vangelis's *Blade Runner* has overdubbed narration, but it's still both beautiful and creepy.

Speaking of creepy, maybe no soundtrack is more unsettling than Angelo Badalamenti's score for the TV show *Twin Peaks*. Even though it sounds light and airy, every minor chord suggests that something is very, very wrong.

Similarly, there's an eerie yet soothing sensibility to Joe Hisaishi's soundtracks for various anime films such as *Princess Mononoke*, *Nausicaä*, *Porco Rosso*, and *My Neighbor Totoro*. The scores capture both heroic and mundane moments equally well, and the occasional lyric won't be too distracting unless you speak Japanese.

Avoid scores like *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. They're jarringly familiar—so much so that your players might think they're playing another game. But for certain circumstances, you might want the original Trek's "Amok Time" Spock-fights-Kirk theme, or the one where they bet thirty quatlus on the newcomer, or ... Well, you get the idea.

The above are all mostly instrumental soundtracks, but vocal soundtracks have their place, too. For example, *The Crow* blends metal, alt-rock, and industrial artists in a disturbing melange of desperation and rage. If you want to fire up your players for morally ambivalent action, *The Crow* should do it.

Your one-way ticket to midnight is the *Heavy Metal* soundtrack, a tour de force of game-altering power tunes, such as Blue Oyster Cult's "Veteran of the Psychic Wars." Sample lyric: "My energy's spent at last, and my armor is destroyed/I have used up all my weapons, and I'm helpless and bereaved/Wounds are all I'm made of/Did I hear you say that this is victory?" What D&D player can't relate to that?

There are too many other good game-oriented soundtracks to list. For certain D&D adventures, try: *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, *Hamlet*, *Interview with the Vampire*, *The Replacement Killers*, *Stargate*, *Mission: Impossible*, *Legend*, *Labyrinth*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Matrix*, *Pi*, *Birdy*, *Apollo 13*, *Mortal Kombat*, *The Rock*, *Crimson Tide*, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, *The Usual Suspects*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Ladyhawke*, *The Exorcist*, *Jurassic Park*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Pretty much any fantasy or sci-fi soundtrack is worth a gamble.

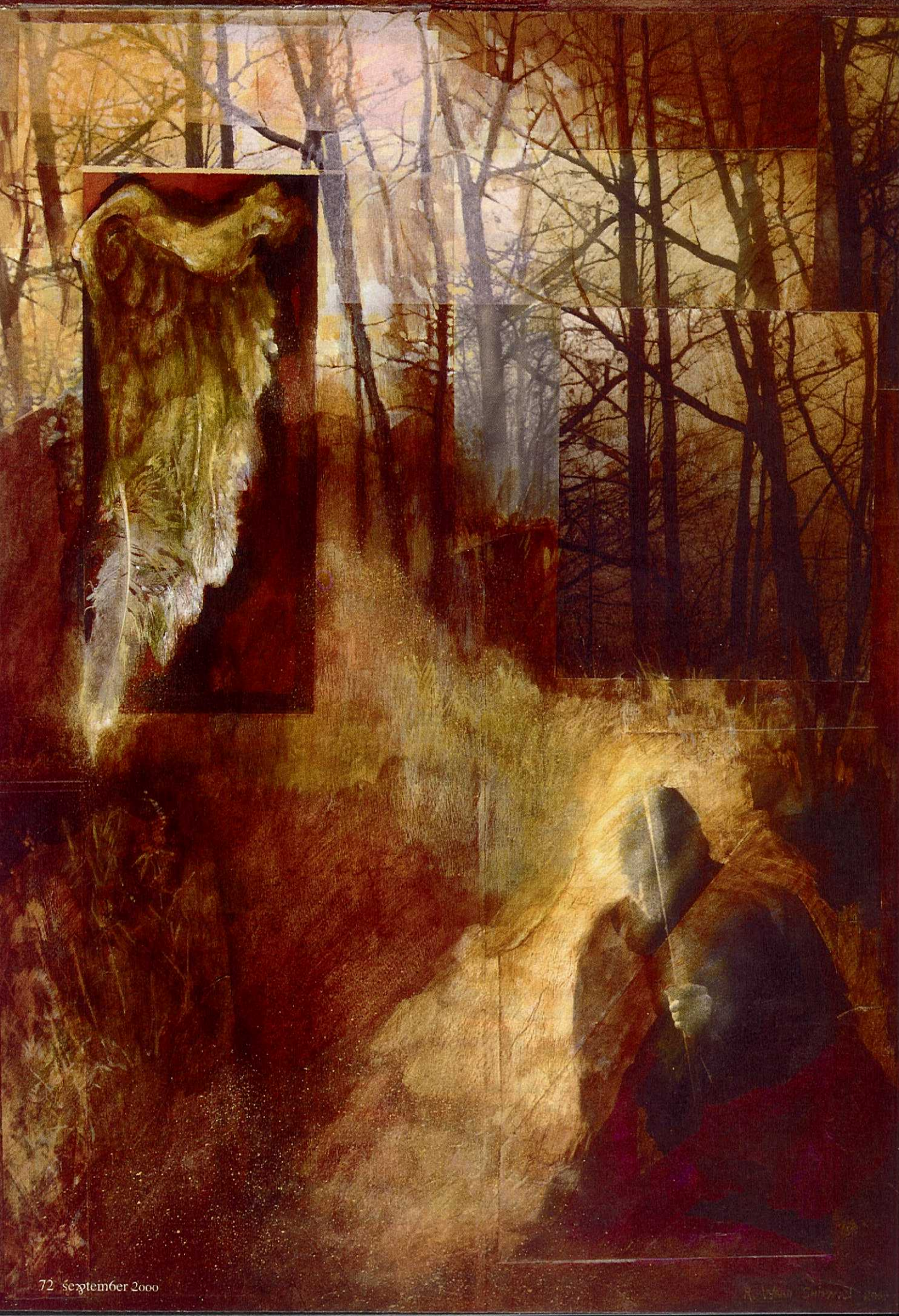
More Than Just Background

Of course, you can always do more than just play albums as background music. Here are some ideas on integrating CDs into your game:

- You can play cuts off a Loreena McKennitt album to simulate an NPC bard's bewitching singing. Any player who goes for the lyric sheet should automatically blow his PC's saving throw.
- Singing monsters like harpies and sirens can be conjured by turning on Capercaillie.
- A noble with a *rod of splendor* might resound with Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man" whenever he enters a room.
- An album of sea chanteys can be played to warn seaborne PCs that a pirate ship is approaching. Start with the volume very low, and gradually adjust it upward till the pirates swashbuckle over and raid the PCs' ship.
- Even tuneless monsters could sing while they fight. Imagine how much scarier a troop of hill giants might be if they sang GWAR tunes as they hurled boulders at the heroes.

If you allow it, your players can bring their own music to the gaming table. I'd certainly permit them to do so—at least until one decided that his character's theme song was the Spice Girls' "Wannabe."

Source	Recommended Work	Battle	Dungeon	Sorcery	Town	Laboratory	Temple	Wilderness	Hell
Lycia	Burning Circle and Then Dust								
The Mask of Zorro	Soundtrack								
The Matrix	Soundtrack								
McKennitt, Loreena	The Book of Secrets, Parallel Dreams								
A Midsummer Night's Dream	Soundtrack								
Ministry	The Mind is a Terrible Thing to Taste								
Mission: Impossible	Soundtrack								
Molly &t the Tinker	Stormin' the Castle, Live From Callahan's								
Mortal Kombat	Soundtrack								
Moussorgsky, Modest	"Night on Bald Mountain" Pictures at an Exhibition								
Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus	Requiem								
My Neighbor Totoro	Soundtrack								
Nausicaä	Soundtrack								
New Christy Minstrels	Very Best of, Definitive New Christy Minstrels								
Nicks, Stevie	Bella Donna, Enchanted								
Nine Inch Nails	Pretty Hate Machine								
Orff, Carl	Carmina Burana (Excalibur soundtrack)								
Osbourne, Ozzy	Blizzard of Ozz, Diary of a Madman								
Patriot Games	Soundtrack								
Pi	Soundtrack								
Pink Floyd	Dark Side of the Moon, The Wall								
The Pogues	If I Should Fall From Grace With God								
Porco Rosso	Soundtrack								
Princess Mononoke	Soundtrack								
Queen	Highlander, Flash Gordon								
Queensryche	Empire, Operation Mindcrime								
Rage Against the Machine	Evil Empire								
Ravel, Maurice	Bolèro, Daphnis and Chloe								
The Replacement Killers	Soundtrack								
Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai	Scheherazade								
Riverdance	Soundtrack								
Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves	Soundtrack								
The Rock	Soundtrack								
The Rocketeer	Soundtrack								
Run Lola Run	Soundtrack								
Saint-Saëns, Camille	Danse Macabre								
Satriani, Joe	Surfing with the Alien								
Segovia, Andrés	Legendary Segovia								
Silly Wizard	Kiss the Tears Away								
Sneakers	Soundtrack								
Something Wicked This Way Comes	Soundtrack								
Star Trek	Soundtrack								
Star Trek II	Soundtrack								
Star Wars	Soundtrack								
Stargate	Soundtrack								
Stravinsky, Igor	The Rite of Spring								
Switchblade Symphony	Bread and Jam for Frances								
Synaesthesia	Desideratum								
Tangerine Dream	Dream Sequence, Rubycon, Green Desert								
Terminator 2: Judgment Day	Soundtrack								
Thief	Soundtrack								
The 13th Warrior	Soundtrack								
Titanic	Soundtrack								
Twin Peaks	Soundtrack								
The Usual Suspects	Soundtrack								
Vivaldi, Antonio	The Four Seasons								
Von Suppé, Franz	"Light Cavalry March"								
Wagner, Richard	Ring Cycle, Tristan and Isolde, Faust, Lohengrin								
Warcraft	Game sounds								
White Zombie	Astrocreep 2000, La Sexorcisto								
Willow	Soundtrack								
Wu-Tang Clan	Wu-Tang Forever								
Yes	Relayer, Fragile, Close to the Edge								



To catch the most elusive magic,
Reynaldo must choose between two worlds.

SONGBIRDS

BY KRISTINE KATHRYN RUSCH

ILLUSTRATED by R. WARD SHIPMAN

THE RAIN WAS HARD AND COLD, THE VILLAGE A WELCOME SIGHT. REYNALDO HAD BEEN riding for days without seeing any signs of civilization, and he had thought that good. If he were to find the Songbirds, he believed he would find them in this wilderness at the very edge of the kingdom.

But even the best hunter welcomed a respite after days of unrelenting rain. The village was as dismal as the weather: small hovels with little more than a door, the occasional house, and finally, at the end of town, an inn that looked like it had seen better days.

At least it had a stable. He dismounted and looked for a stablehand. Seeing none, he led Cara to the only stall.

He would have tended her himself even if there had been a stablehand. She was the only pure white horse in the kingdom. He never let anyone else touch her—only his brushstroke cleaned her coat, only his hand fed her, and he cherished the small nuzzle she would give his shoulder, or her soft sighs of contentment. They were his best reward, and his only real joy.

His life was bleak—had been since he was a boy—but he knew no way of improving it. He already lived in the palace, and he was the best in his field. He wasn't sure he had the capacity for love. Even if he did, he wasn't sure it would improve his life. The kingdom was a gloomy place, but he'd heard of none better.

He'd seen better only in his dreams—dreams he could barely remember.

The hay in the stalls was fresh. There was good food, several buckets of rainwater, and surprisingly, a few apples. He gave Cara one—a thank-you for carrying him so far—and then he stroked her velvet nose.

"If the stablehand shows up and gives you trouble," he said, "call for me. You know I'll hear you."

She whickered and nudged him, as if urging him to go inside the inn and take care of himself.

He hated to leave her, but he really wanted a warm meal and a soft bed. If there was no room, he'd sleep in the hay. Cara wouldn't like it; she wanted privacy at night. But he would rest easier, knowing she was all right.

She nudged him a second time, and he smiled. "All right, I'll go. Sleep well."

But she wasn't looking at him any longer. Her head was bowed, and she was drinking from one of the buckets he'd set near her. When he walked back into the rain, it seemed as if she had forgotten all about him.

THE INN HAD ONE ROOM LEFT, so small that to call it a closet would be to give it dignity. He'd left it almost immediately and headed into the tavern. Locals clustered around the wooden tables, drinking the watered-down ale.

He picked a table in the back corner, close enough to the fire to get warm, but far enough away that no one would notice him. One of his best skills was his ability to disappear into his surroundings, to make those around him comfortable with his quiet.

"We have mutton tonight," the serving wench said. She had noticed him more quickly than he liked. He looked up at her with surprise. He hadn't even heard her approach.

She was young and thin, barely big enough to carry trays.

"Mutton is fine," he said.

She nodded and went away. He leaned back in his chair, legs stretched out before him, ankles crossed. His dark pants, tucked into his scuffed boots, were wet and mud-covered. Only his shirt remained dry, except on the shoulders, where his long black hair dripped.

The tavern was clearly where the innkeeper made his money. Only a handful of the locals were eating, and once his food came he knew why. The mutton was old and gray, leaving a pool of grease in the broth, and the bread had mold on the corners.

Because he hadn't eaten in two days, he picked off the mold and choked down the bread, but the mutton wasn't worth his time. He sent it back with a request for cheese and some more bread.

It took the serving wench only a few moments to bring him a new plate. The food on this one looked appetizing. The bread was still warm. The cheese was a perfect white, soft to the touch. Obviously, the innkeeper here had two kinds of food: the cheap horrible stuff for travelers, and the good food for regulars. By complaining, Reynaldo had put himself in a new category.

He thanked the girl and sighed as she walked away. He wished she were plump and world-wise. He would have loved someone warm in his bed tonight. The road had given him a chill. He hadn't expected to have been traveling for so long.

Prince Tadeo had his heart set on a Songbird for the coronation. He had sent Reynaldo—and no one else—after it. Reynaldo was the best magic hunter in the Kingdom, and this trip was meant as an honor—or perhaps a chance at humiliation.

He knew that the other magic hunters had snuck away surreptitiously, hoping to beat him at the profession he had invented. But they would not. In their entire careers, they found only the easy, obvious creatures. It took Reynaldo's patience, his determination, and his stillness to bring the truly elusive ones out of hiding.

That, and his ability to find the remote places where the creatures lived in the first place. He had been the only one of Tadeo's hunters to capture creatures like unicorns and sea witches. His triumphs gave him a room in the palace, a favored position at Tadeo's table, and a bit of gold, but not enough to last him through the long dry spells between Tadeo's whims.

Songbirds were proving the most elusive of the magics that Reynaldo had ever sought. Reynaldo had hoped that Tadeo wouldn't learn of them, but he did a year ago when a storyteller visited court. The storyteller told an ancient tale about the Songbirds and the days when their magic filled the kingdom. Then they had served the king and, more than once, saved his crown.

Things had changed in the centuries since. For reasons the storyteller did not explain, the Songbirds rebelled. Most were slaughtered, and the remainder, it was said, went into hiding. No one had seen a Songbird in nearly a thousand years.

Reynaldo had tried to tell Tadeo that, but of course the Prince didn't listen. Tadeo had been a magic collector since childhood, and to get a magical creature thought extinct only increased the allure. Tadeo thought it perfect for his coronation, half a year away. He wanted to reveal the greatest magic of all on that day.

Reynaldo sighed and ate the thick warm bread. It had a freshness that was foreign to his tongue. Not even the bread at the palace was this good. His second mug of ale was not diluted this time, and the cheese was the best he had ever tasted.

He was nearly done eating when the serving wench climbed on a stool in front of the fireplace. Conversation ceased, and Reynaldo pushed back his chair. The girl seemed too young to be the entertainment, but she wrapped her hands around her knee as if she were accustomed to sitting in front of a crowd. She surveyed everyone before her gaze met his. She had very old eyes.

She leaned her head back and began to sing without accompaniment. The hush in the room grew. Her voice had a richness and depth that he had never heard in a human voice before. It had overtones, undertones, and harmonics all its own.

Her first song had no words, and neither did her second. By the third, he no longer listened for words, only for tonalities and phrasing. The sound of her voice sent shivers through him. The place seemed brighter, the fire warmer, and the girl prettier.

He found himself wondering if he'd had too much to drink and knowing he hadn't. He was listening to a Songbird.

He had completed his quest.

REYNALDO KNEW BETTER than to capture her in public. He had some research to do. He needed to find out if the girl's family were all Songbirds and if the rest of the village knew it. The girl, young as she was, might not be the best choice for Tadeo's collection. An older Songbird might serve better and not be as hard to hold.

Magic, Reynaldo knew, was always hard to hold, especially for those who had none. He had captured magic countless times using only his intelligence and his strength. Underestimating magic was always the worst thing a hunter could do.

Reynaldo listened until the girl finished her miraculous performance. The local crowd applauded, then went back to their ale as if the girl had done nothing unusual. He allowed himself to be shocked and pleased, made a point of complimenting her on the beauty of her voice, and got a blush in return as well as a free mug of ale. But he asked no questions, sought no answers, just paid his table with one of his last coins and took the stairs to his tiny room.

There he collapsed on the bed, determined to have a plan by morning.

REYNALDO DREAMED OF COLORS so bright that they hurt his eyes, scents so pure that they cleared his head, and fabrics so soft that they soothed his skin. He'd had dreams like this before. He believed they were moments when he actually touched magic, when he was allowed to enter a world where life was more vivid, each sensation more profound than the one before. He knew if he stayed here long, he would never want to leave. But he also knew that he could not stay.

The colors faded first, then the scents, and finally the softness. He was cold and damp, and the bed smelled of swamp water. He stirred, realized that his face was wet, and opened his eyes.

He was lying face-down in a rut on a muddy road. It was raining so hard that the rut was filling with water. If he'd dreamed much longer, he would have drowned.

Reynaldo sat up and wiped the mud from his face. He was wearing his cloak and boots, even though he had taken them off for bed. The cloak had been stolen from a water elf, and kept his torso dry, but his pants and boots were wet as they had been the night before.

He was in a clearing, and the road continued north into a forest of trees. The same forest he had seen the night before at the edge of the village.

But the village itself was gone. There were no hovels, no small houses, no inn. And no stable.

Cara. He felt his breath catch. He scanned the area, looking for her, hoping she was grazing beneath a tree. He should have seen her white coat even if she were miles away, but he saw nothing except the dark trees, mud, and the greenish gray grass.

She was gone. They had taken her, his prize possession, his heart, and his companion.

It was almost as an afterthought that he patted his cloak, feeling for his purse, humble as it was, and couldn't find that either.

The great magic hunter had been robbed by his quarry. They had known from the beginning who he was and what he wanted, and they had toyed with him all night. Then they had left him here, alone, to die.

Although that wasn't accurate. He had clearly been at their mercy. They let him live as a warning, perhaps to Tadeo, or perhaps to himself.

But they had taken Cara, and *no one* did that. He had to find her. He couldn't imagine being without her.

Rain splattered around him. The puddle grew deeper, the mud thicker. He got up and shook his hair free of his cloak, then studied the area, looking for signs of magic.

The clearing was an unnatural one, with paths that branched off the road and then stopped. Large patches of dead grass, and even larger patches of mud covered the ground. He saw bits of hay and horse manure where the stable had recently stood.

The village had been here, just as the inn had been here, just as the stable had been here. But it was all gone now.

The wind came up, cold and biting, pushing Reynaldo back toward the palace. He stood his ground.

In the past, he had eaten fairy food and had awakened hungry. He was not hungry now. He had slept the sleep of the enchanted and awakened exhausted. He was not exhausted now.

Obviously his meal and dreams had been as real as they had always been. During his sleep, the Songbirds had taken their village and left him behind.

If Reynaldo went back to the palace for help, he would have to admit his failure. His failure would please Tadeo almost as much as success. Tadeo had been giving Reynaldo tougher and tougher assignments, hoping for this day when his great magic hunter would falter.

But Tadeo did not realize that success was all Reynaldo had. No family, no real friends, no wealth, and no home of his own. Since Reynaldo had been forced into this cursed life by his even more accursed talent, he had lost everything except himself.

Now he faced losing even that.

He would not ride back to Tadeo in shame. He would retrieve his horse, at the very least. At the very best, he would clip the wings of a Songbird and carry it home to its own large, beautiful, gilded cage.

SIX DAYS OF TRACKING on foot. It rained the entire time, although the rain varied from a downpour to drippy mist. The forest seemed empty of life except for Reynaldo, downed branches, and fallen leaves. He managed to scrounge berries, roots, and bark. That and rainwater kept him sated. But he never had a fire, and his feet were never dry.

The rain, he knew, was not natural. Nor was the stillness of the forest. He had to strain to hear his own feet moving through the mud.

And as he walked, he reviewed what the stories had told him about Songbirds.

Songbirds looked human but lacked all human kindness, all human warmth. Their magic lived in their songs. As long as a Songbird sang the same piece—without starting over—it could create a world with that music. Or it could persuade, cajole, or change a long-held opinion. Some even said that a Songbird's song could make a heartless man fall in love.

On the seventh day Reynaldo found the village beside a raging river. The village looked the same as before. The houses were in the same order, and the road went through the center with paths coming off the sides. The inn was at the north end, and the stable was beside it.

He knew that he found the place because they wanted him to. If they could move the village, they could have kept it hidden from him forever. They finally wanted to see him—for reasons he was sure he would soon discover.

Reynaldo went directly to the stable and pulled open the wooden doors. Lamps hung from pegs on the wall, shedding a soft light on the straw-covered floor. Cara was in the last stall. She whickered when she saw Reynaldo, and his heart leapt. He had missed her; part of him had thought he would never see her again.

He stepped inside. For the first time in a week, water did not hit him in the face. He was cold and numb, unable to absorb the heat.

He started toward Cara when a melodious voice said, "Stop."

Reynaldo sighed. He had known that it wouldn't be this easy.

"Give me my horse and my money," he said, "and I will leave you in peace."

"Of course you will," the voice mocked him. "Until you remember your promise to clip our wings."

The phrase was not metaphorical. Songbirds had wings, so the stories said, invisible wings that, if clipped properly, would forever trap them in the hand that maimed them.

"You seem to know a lot about me." Reynaldo was still watching Cara. The horse was not nervous around the Songbird. Magical creatures usually made Cara skittish.

"Dreams reveal much about the dreamer."

So they had peered into his sleep. The Songbirds had a greater magic than he had originally thought.

"But dreams do not reveal all," Reynaldo said. "I did not promise Tadeo that I would clip your wings. I promised him a Songbird for his coronation."

"For his collection."

Slowly Reynaldo turned, hands out, showing that he meant no harm. "Tadeo always wants magic for his collection. What he does with the magic I bring back is his choice. I was instructed to bring back a Songbird for the coronation, nothing else."

He could not see the Songbird, but there were shadows near the door that hadn't been there before.

"You tell pretty lies," the Songbird said. "Is that how you capture your prey?"

"No."

"Pity. It would seem the logical thing." The Songbird stepped out of the shadows. It was the girl, the one who had waited on him, who had sung to him. Only she was not a girl. That had been an illusion. She was a small woman whose hair, skin, and eyes were brown. She wore a brown cape over brown clothing. The only spots of color on her were her red lips and rosy cheeks.

She held herself like a human woman would. He had thought Songbirds would move differently to protect their invisible wings.

"My horse," he said softly, "and my money. Then I will leave."

She smiled. "You're exhausted and wet. You haven't eaten properly in a week. We can give you food and shelter."

"Like you did the last time?" he said. "I nearly drowned."

"The food was real enough, and the bed, too. You spent half the night in it."

"You let me know what you were."

"It took you long enough to figure that out."

"I knew the moment you sat on that stool."

"And you did nothing? That's hard to believe." She crossed her arms. Her cloak bunched slightly, unnaturally, in the back.

"You watched me that first time, peered into my dreams when I slept in the forest, and then let me find you." He glanced at Cara. She seemed to be watching with great interest.

The Songbird did not answer his question, but he saw the truth of it in her eyes. That was the only way they would have known his identity. He hunted infrequently, and never the same creatures twice.

"That still doesn't explain," he said into her silence, "why you're treating me this way. You could have killed me that night. Or better, you could have ignored me. There was no reason to let me see your village. But you want something. What is it?"

"We want to give you your life back," she said.

He felt his shoulders stiffen. "My life has never left me. Or are you telling me that I'm dead?"

"You're not dead." Her voice was soft. "You just haven't lived for years."

"I don't sing pretty songs and laugh as much as some think I should. But I live."

"In service to a boy who believes that beauty should be caged."

Reynaldo took a deep breath. Some of the tension slipped away. "So that's it. You want me to renounce my work."

"More than that," she said. "We want you to free the creatures that Tadeo holds."

"We?" he said. "Do you speak for yourself or your people?"

"The Songbirds listen to me."

"And they want me to destroy Prince Tadeo's collection."

"Yes."

"Why would I do that?"

"Because of your dreams." She took a step toward him. Her voice was mesmerizing, warm, and rich. "I can let you live in the world of your dreams."

He recognized charm when he heard it. Of course Songbirds could entice. Magic lived in their voices.

"Live in the world of my dreams." He made it sound like he was tempted and, if he told himself the truth, he was. "The lush beautiful magical world that I see whenever I'm near something unusual?"

She nodded.

"You want me to risk everything, including my life, for a place where the food tastes better and the colors are brighter? A world I can barely remember when I'm awake? A world I'm not even sure exists?"

Those eyes held him. "Are you sure this one exists?"

He laughed. "I am not a philosopher. Questions like that are better contemplated by smarter men than I."

"There are few men smarter than you are," she said. "You simply have chosen a poor way to use your intelligence."

He crossed his arms. "The creatures I've given to Prince Tadeo live in complete luxury."

An emotion flashed across her face too quickly for him to read it. Disgust? Amusement? He wasn't sure.

"You must decide what you want." The vibrancy had left her voice.

"What if I don't do what you want?"

"Then you'll wander the forest until you decide to return empty-handed. You will lose your status as the greatest magic hunter, but you will have your life. Or you could chose to make a new life away from the kingdom. You do not have to do what we want."

The tension spread through him again. "If I do what you ask, Prince Tadeo will have me killed."

"You chose to come after us."

"There are others who are after you."

Her eyes glittered. "But there is only one who can free Tadeo's prisoners."

He was silent for a moment, weighing her words. Then he said, "What if I don't want to live in the land of my dreams? If I do what you ask, what will you give me instead?"

"A miracle," she said quietly.

He had seen miracles all his life—and had captured them for his prince.

"I'll do as you ask," he said.

AN INSTANT LATER he was in the rain, on Cara's back, heading toward the palace. A week of riding vanished in a single moment.

It felt good to touch her. Part of him thought he had lost her forever. He touched her mane for reassurance, and she grunted, as if he had disturbed her rhythm somehow.

The rain seemed even colder, the wind harsher. The drops stung at his cheeks. Cara's hooves threw mud on him, and only the horse's innate grace prevented them from slipping on the washed-out roads.

It had rained here too, rained like he had never seen. Tadeo would be displeased. He hated rain, always longing for sun or snow.

And now Reynaldo was returning without his prize. He had thought he would have time to come up with a story, but he had nothing. It was the same as having failed.

The palace stood alone at the edge of the Great Wood. The Royal City was several miles to the south. The palace, built a thousand years ago, was purposely isolated; the land itself was seen as a protection against rebels who would attack a king.

But for nearly ten years, there had been no king to attack. Tadeo's father had died of a wasting disease. Tadeo's mother, his father's fifth wife and the only one to bear a child, had become Queen Mother, but the kingdom's laws prevented her from ruling despite her son's youth. Since he was eleven, Tadeo had acted as king. On his twenty-first birthday, he would become king officially.

The coronation would be his greatest triumph, or so he hoped.

Reynaldo reached the palace gates where the guards recognized him and opened the way. He headed straight for the stables. Once Cara was groomed and fed and placed in a comfortable stall, Reynaldo tended to his own needs.

His rooms were large and well furnished. The main room had carved wooden cabinets that were centuries old, couches embroidered by ladies in waiting to nearly two dozen different queens.

Reynaldo did not even look into the bedroom or the small dining room. Instead he ordered a bath, then went to the wardrobe to chose the proper clothes for an audience with Tadeo.

With the bath came food, and a summons from Tadeo.

The bath was heaven, the steaming water soothing to his cold limbs. He felt as if he hadn't been warm in a year; he ate grapes and small cakes, and drank the cool artesian water.

When he was through, he dressed in silk robes over a white shirt, and a pair of velvet riding trousers that he tucked into polished black boots. The outfit was a mixture of court dress and his usual clothing. He was the only member of the court who did not follow Tadeo's strict dress codes.

Reynaldo hated looking tame.

He took back corridors and a secret passage that led to Tadeo's private audience room. Although Reynaldo was not keeping his return a secret, he did not want the news of it to spread too quickly either.

He had the beginnings of a plan.

He knocked on the hidden door, and Tadeo himself opened it. The prince was slight, dark-haired, and smooth-skinned.

"I have not heard of any great triumph," Tadeo said as he stepped aside, allowing Reynaldo into the room. "Where's my Songbird?"

"Elusive," Reynaldo said.

"Elusive or not, you were supposed to find one." Tadeo crossed the hand-woven carpet to the gilt chair that he used only when speaking business. "Have you?"

"I have been following myth, legend, and rumor for weeks." Reynaldo took a simple wooden chair and sat across from Tadeo. "I found a village at the very edge of the kingdom which led me to believe that some of what I heard is true, and some is not. What is clear is that Songbirds are more powerful than the stories let on. That the kingdom held them in thrall once seems miraculous to me."

Tadeo waved a hand in dismissal. He did not care about the past, only the present. "If you were close, I don't understand why you came back."

"To offer you a choice." The room was too warm. A fire burned high, probably to ward off the damp. The windows were shuttered against the rain, but Reynaldo could hear it, beating against the walls as if it were trying to break in.

Tadeo raised his eyebrows. "A choice? There is no choice, Reynaldo. You are to bring me a Songbird."

"At any cost?"

"Yes, at any cost." And then Tadeo frowned. "What aren't you telling me?"

"The price," Reynaldo said. "But if you don't want to hear it ..."

"You know that I will not pay you more than we have already agreed." Tadeo crossed his arms. He was getting angry.

"The cost is yours, not mine."

"Whatever does that mean?"

"It means," Reynaldo said, "that magic is powerful, and sometimes not worth the price of capture."

"Nonsense," Tadeo said. "We haven't paid a price before."

Reynaldo stared at him for a moment. Tadeo was so young that his skin was still soft and lined with baby fat. He had no idea how life exacted a price.

"Well, then," Reynaldo said, pushing himself out of the chair. "If you are unconcerned, I will go about my business."

He had almost made it to the door when Tadeo said, "You've never approached me about a price before. What has changed this time?"

Reynaldo did not turn around. Instead, he smiled. He had maneuvered Tadeo where he wanted him. "The only way I can catch a Songbird is to open the cages of your collection."

"My collection!" Tadeo sounded stunned.

Reynaldo slowly faced him. The boy's cheeks were red. He didn't like the idea. He would now have to chose between all his toys and a single great prize.

"Are you certain you will be able to capture a Songbird with this method?" Tadeo asked.

"Yes," Reynaldo said.

Tadeo leaned back in his chair. It was still too large for him. He looked like a child trying to act like an adult. All except his eyes. They were too cold to be a child's. "Can you recapture my collection?"

"Of course, Sire. They have my marks. They should be easier to find this time."

"How do I know that you're not doing this just to create more work for yourself?"

Reynaldo smiled. "Because there is still so much work to do. You only possess a fraction of the magic that exists in this Kingdom. If you want a complete collection, you must

hire two others who are as good as I am—and we both know there are none—and then the three of us must capture a magical creature once a month."

Tadeo sighed. "Quite a risk you're taking, Reynaldo. I will kill you if you fail."

"My life is not worth the price of your collection."

"True." Tadeo stood. He took a deep breath. He was clearly uneasy about the decision, but he had made it, as Reynaldo wanted him to. That way, if Tadeo was dissatisfied with the Songbird, he had no one to blame but himself. "You have my permission."

Reynaldo bowed once. "Thank you, Sire," he said, and let himself out.

THE COLLECTION WAS HOUSED in its own tower on the palace grounds. Tadeo had the tower built after Reynaldo had caught his first creature. The tower was designed so that the nobles could view the collection, perhaps even see a bit of magic, without harm or fear that the creatures would escape.

Tadeo had dismissed the guards. The rest of the staff had been ordered not to interfere with Reynaldo.

He was dressed all in black. His boots were silver, his gloves so thick that nothing could touch him. His heart pounded hard. He had caught fifteen creatures, but he had never freed one before. On this day, he would free everything, even the creatures caught by his imitators.

Reynaldo carried a bucket filled with sea water and went to the fresh water grotto in the basement to see sea witch, water elf, and mermaid. The grotto was large and deep. The walls and ceiling were made of rock so that they looked like a natural cave. The humid air smelled of dampness and despair.

They hid, as they always did when he came, but he lured them with the salt water's scent. The sea witch rose first, her magnificent face—once the gray of a stormy ocean, now so pale as to be nearly clear—flashing with anger.

"What more can you do to us?" she asked, and as she did, he splashed her with the salt water. She sputtered, shocked, and then the gray returned to her face.

"This is a trick," she said.

He shook his head.

She snapped her fingers, rousing her companions, then she cursed Reynaldo and vanished, leaving a small water funnel in her wake. As the water elf rose to the surface, Reynaldo splashed him as well, and then the mermaid. They didn't vanish like the sea witch. The water elf flew away on a rain cloud, and the mermaid climbed to the side of the grotto. She stood for a moment, naked, legs in place of her tail, and then she approached him.

"May you live as I have these past eight years," she said in her throaty voice. Then she slapped him, took his cloak, wrapped it around herself, and walked out of the room.

Reynaldo stared at the fresh water grotto for a moment, stunned at how easy it was to free its prisoners. It had taken him weeks to catch the mermaid, months to capture the water elf, and nearly a year to find the sea witch, let alone outsmart her. All that work, gone, in the space of a few moments.

He poured the remaining sea water out of the bucket. He cleaned the bucket thoroughly and filled it with fresh water. Then he went to the salt water pools to free the nymphs and water sprites.

By mid-morning, half his prizes were gone. He felt their losses as if the collection belonged to him, not Tadeo. For the first time, Reynaldo wondered at the wisdom of his plan.

But he did not stop. He led the troll to the grotto's bridge, gave gold to the dragon, and pocketed the scissors from the life-weaver's room. He placed the mushroom elf on loamy ground and gave the griffin his tail. He went through every room, reversing each capture spell until he found himself alone in the tower.

The room was round and made of stone. There was no furniture here, no windows, nothing except a pair of gold-flecked wings in a case made of glass.

He stared at them for the longest time, remembering that summer afternoon in the forest, not far from here. He had been a young man then, so young he had not known a woman and had never dreamed of love. He sat in the glade and waited for days, until the call of his soul was answered.

This was what he had feared most—this room, this reversal. And he hadn't even admitted it to himself.

He opened the case and removed the wings. They were as soft as he remembered, and they smelled faintly of lavender, just as they had all those years ago. He brought them to his face, leaned his cheek into them, remembering that moment, that fleeting moment, when he thought the world could belong to him.

But of course it didn't. Magic was like a sparkle, something that could be ruined by prolonged close contact. And yet, being close was all he had ever wanted.

He sighed, set the bucket down, and tucked the wings under his arm. He went down the circular staircase to the main floor of the empty tower, and let himself out.

The raindrops seemed fatter than before, colder, almost ice. The sky was black. Sometimes, when it rained like this, it felt as if the sun would never shine again.

He crossed the muddy grounds to the stable. The grooms were gone, as he had ordered.

Cara watched him approach. She was strangely motionless. He would have thought that she would have been pacing the stall in anticipation. But her blue eyes were wide, her white coat trembling, her nose quivering. Those were the only things that revealed her emotions. No one else would have seen it, but no one else knew what Reynaldo held in his hands.

There was nothing he could say—and neither could Cara. She had lost the art of speech long ago. It had been the second thing to go after he took her wings. First her horn, then her speech, and finally the unusual intelligence in those blue eyes.

He opened the stall door and placed the wings on her back, careful to put them on the proper sides. For a moment, he thought it had been too long, that they wouldn't take. Then they slipped into her skin as if they had never left her.

Her eyes grew darker, her coat gained a sprinkling of gold, and with a twist of light, her horn returned. The air sparkled around her, as it had when she had first come to him in the glade all those years ago.

He pulled the stall door back and stood aside. She turned her head toward him. She was beautiful again, her eyes so

alive that he wondered how he had ever been satisfied with what he had made her.

She brushed his face with the tip of her horn. It was soft and warm, and he could feel the magic sloughing off it. The magic burned him, like sparks from a campfire.

"In spite of myself, I am fond of you," she said, her voice as deep and rich as the Songbird's.

He stepped back so that she could not touch him. "You've been with me all this time. You know what I've become."

"But I remember what you were." She tossed her mane. More magic fell around him, burning when it touched his skin. Then she walked out of the stall and disappeared in the rain.

She did not look back, and he could not stop staring after her. It had been an impulse, the first time, a hunch. Somehow he had known that if he took her wings, she would be his forever. She had come to him, and he wanted to tell his friends about it. But he knew that, if he returned to his friends without her, they wouldn't have believed him. They would have laughed. He brought her to prove to them that he had touched magic.

Then Tadeo saw her and demanded one of his own. But Reynaldo had lied. He had said that he was building a reputation and would not waste his time capturing the same type of creature twice.

For a decade, he had lived up to that vow.

Now Cara was gone, walking away as if they had not spent the last ten years together. He had thought her his only remaining friend.

He had been wrong.

"I did not think you would live up to the bargain." The Songbird was in the stall with him. She seemed brighter too—shots of gold in her brown hair, a light behind her dark eyes.

Reynaldo slipped his hand in his pocket, his fingers trembling.

"I didn't live up to it," he said, grabbing her and pulling her close. He wrapped one arm around her tiny little neck and held her tightly.

He could feel her heart beating rapidly and knew he felt her fright. His fingers closed on the handle of the scissors as he took them out of his pocket and held them over her right shoulder—the very spot where her coat had bunched a few nights before.

"Prince Tadeo let me use his collection to catch you." Reynaldo could hear her breath rasping, feel the fragility of her small bones against his.

"If you clip my wings," she said, "you destroy more than you can imagine."

He could feel the wings now, fluttering against him. Their feathers were sharp, scratching him.

"It's a risk I will take," he said, opening the scissors.

"You'll start the war all over again. This time, your people will know they lost."

His hand was still trembling. It took all of his strength to hold her and keep the scissors open. "What do you mean?"

"You have always been wrong." Her voice wobbled. "You have a magic. It's a bit of vision, nothing more. You can see edges, corners, things that are usually hidden from your people. That was how you hunted. That was how you knew how to cripple Cara."

He flinched at the phrase. It wasn't accurate. Cara had her wings again. She wasn't permanently damaged.

Before he spoke, he made sure his voice held no emotion. "So?"

"So you dream," she said, "and see what is."

His hand slipped and he nicked her. She cried out. A spot of blood welled in the air an inch above her right shoulder. "What does that matter?"

"You're not the first. Your people's powers have been growing."

"Be clearer," he said softly, "or I will cut your wing off."

"Your people's new powers threaten us."

He tightened his grip on her. Her bones felt more fragile than any bones he had ever touched. "We have always threatened you. The fact that we grow stronger should make no difference."

She laughed. The sound was bitter. "Think. How could we, with all our magic, lose a battle against humans?"

"The rebellion?" he asked. "The Songbirds against the king? Are you saying you won?"

"We create worlds with our song. As long as we never repeat a phrase, the world holds. This one has held for a thousand years."

He gripped the scissors tighter. "I always knew the rain wasn't natural. There hasn't been enough sun."

"You noticed that, but almost no one else did. They just complained."

"Why did you create such a dismal place?"

"Because you deserved it." She stirred in his arms. "There is no rain now."

He strengthened his hold on her, fearing it was a trick. Then he peered beyond her through the open stable door. Weak sunlight illuminated the mud and the standing water. Cara's hoofprints, leading away from the stable, glittered like gold.

"What's changed?" he asked.

"The magic you captured is now free."

"Why would that make a difference?"

"You held it in thrall, diminishing it."

"So I was defeating you all by myself." He brought the scissors down again. "I could have destroyed you."

"Only the illusion," she whispered.

"And once the illusion disappeared, we would have had a chance to fight you again."

She was silent.

"The battle must have been close," he said. "You won by a small margin, or you would not imprison us like this. We barely remembered your existence. You would have kept us ignorant forever if you could."

A shiver ran through her.

"What happens now?" he asked. "What if I clip your wings?"

She opened her mouth and sang a song so clear and pure that the hairs on the back of his neck rose. Around him, the stable melted away. He was standing in the middle of a clearing, very much like the one in which he had found Cara.

The air was fresh and smelled of spring, the grass was greener than any he had ever seen, the sunlight so brilliant that it hurt his eyes. He hadn't realized how diminished his world had been.

There were creatures all around him—in the sky, on the ferns by his feet, on the flowers blooming beneath the trees. In front of him, three Songbirds—a man and two women—stood with their arms around each other. They sang in perfect harmony. Another Songbird approached, another man. For a

moment, his song blended with theirs, and then one of the women bowed her head, excusing herself, and walked away. The new man took her place.

"This is a trick," Reynaldo whispered.

"I wish it were," his Songbird said. "But now that you see, I can't blind you again."

"If I let you go, you'll let me live here."

"Yes," she said.

"And what of my people? They'll stay in the darkness and rain, prisoners who have no idea that they're imprisoned."

"They aren't unhappy," she said.

"Are you so sure?" he asked. "If I dream of this place, what's to say others don't as well?"

He felt her stiffen beneath him. So others did dream. He wasn't the only threat.

"Your people started the war," the Songbird said softly.

"That was a thousand years ago." He was growing cold. "None of the people who harmed you live any longer."

"But you collect us as if we were trophies," she said. "We're not."

"No," he said. "We are the trophies now."

She shuddered once and then went very still. Her heartbeat was just as rapid, just as frightened. It was the only thing that gave her away.

"I have the power to change everything, don't I?" he asked. "To blend our worlds the way they were before."

"You're not ready to live with us again," she said.

"I think we are. Your world is leaching into ours. I have powers I should not have, and your world bleeds into my dreams. Does ours bleed into yours?"

She was leaning against him as if she were having trouble standing on her own. "If you stay here and do not bring the others, you will have more magic than you ever dreamed of, riches beyond your power to imagine, beautiful women—anything. Anything at all."

His hand was no longer trembling. "And if I refuse?"

"You will stand in both worlds, and live in neither."

"I will control both worlds," he said, "any time I threaten your music. It's a stalemate. One I could end with two snips of these shears."

"Please, don't. The war—"

"Won't happen. My people will be too confused, too awed by this new world. They've never seen real beauty. They won't know what it is. And because of that, your people will gain power. They won't have to sing all the time, won't have to expend the magic to create an illusion. We—all of us—might move forward."

"We might slaughter each other again."

Her blood, warm and sticky, was flowing onto the arm he used to hold her.

"End your illusion," he said, "and keep your wings."

"It'll be chaos."

"Yes," he said softly.

The other Songbirds were watching as if they knew that everything rested on this moment. She closed her eyes. He could feel her wings pressing against his chest.

"Stop singing," she whispered.

Faces turned toward her, faces he hadn't seen before. Grass elves looked up from their perches on long blades, flower sprites from their petals, acorn fairies from their leaves.

"What?" a thousand voices whispered, as faint as the wind in trees.

She sighed, then said again, "Stop singing."

The Songbirds stared at her as if she had lost her mind. She was pressing against Reynaldo harder now, and he realized that she was growing weaker.

"Stop singing," he said, "or I'll let her die. What does it take? The loss of one wing? Or both? And if you lose her magic, you lose all, don't you? She's more powerful than all the creatures I captured combined."

The male Songbird closed his mouth. The harmony faded, and then the female Songbird stopped, then the other male. Gradually the music vanished.

Reynaldo's ears rang. He hadn't heard silence before—not once in his entire life.

Then the silence ended. He heard screams, shouts, and a bellow that he recognized. Tadeo stood a few yards away and screamed Reynaldo's name.

Reynaldo did not answer. He didn't have to. In this place, there was no kingdom, and Tadeo was simply a young, spoiled boy.

The Songbird let out a small sigh. Her heartbeat wasn't as rapid. Reynaldo scooped her in his arms and carried her to the other Songbirds.

He handed her to them, and one of them carried her away through the tall grass. Reynaldo looked toward the trees and saw Cara staring at him, her eyes filled with tears. Her beauty took his breath away. He had tried to capture that beauty and failed. Holding her had nearly destroyed her.

Just as the world he'd been living in had nearly destroyed him.

He reached for her, but she vanished into the trees. He could pursue her, but to what end? She deserved a life, a free life, just like he did.

Tadeo had reached his side. His face was red with the strain of walking, his skin sheened with sweat.

"Reynaldo," he said, "what is the meaning of this?"

"We've lost our home, Tadeo. We're in the world we've always dreamed of."

"I never dreamed of this," Tadeo said.

But Reynaldo had. A world so bright and vivid that it threatened to overwhelm him. He had been right. His people would be weaker here while they learned to accept the changes. But they would learn—if the right person taught them.

"What do we do now?" Tadeo asked.

Reynaldo gazed at him for a moment—the boy who finally knew how it felt to lose everything. Tadeo couldn't lead them here. He lacked the understanding. He lacked the vision.

He lacked the magic.

But Reynaldo had the magic, the vision, and the understanding. As well as the willingness to use it. He just didn't have to use it in service to Tadeo any more.

Reynaldo could make choices that benefitted his people instead of harmed them.

The world had changed, in more ways than one.

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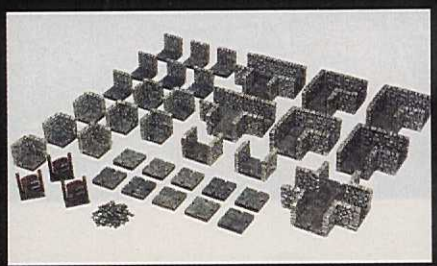

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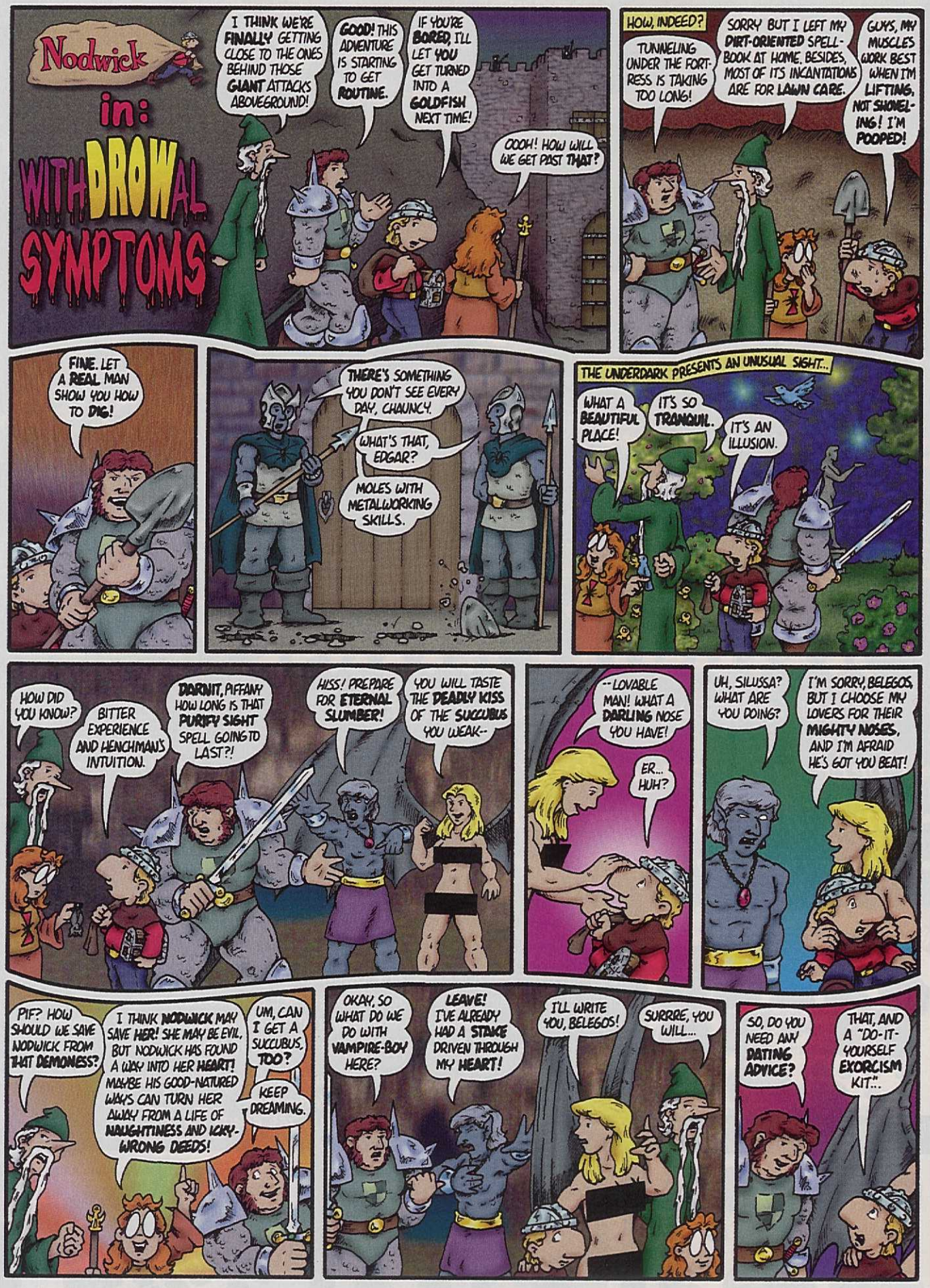
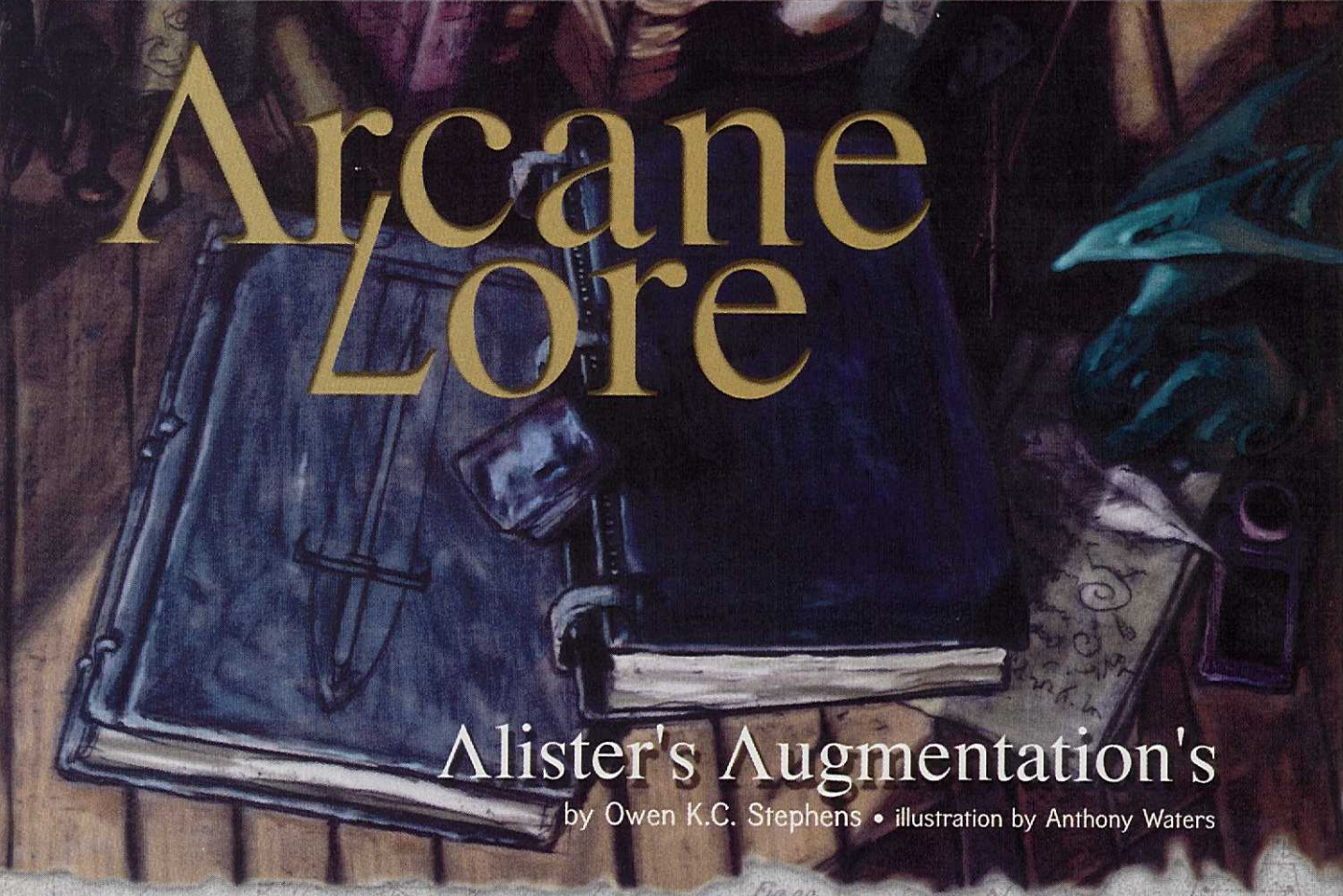

Nodwick
in:
WITHDROWAL SYMPTOMS
I THINK WE'RE FINALLY GETTING CLOSE TO THE ONES BEHIND THOSE GIANT ATTACKS ABOVEGROUND!
GOOD! THIS ADVENTURE IS STARTING TO GET ROUTINE.
IF YOU'RE BORED, I'LL LET YOU GET TURNED INTO A GOLDFISH NEXT TIME!
OOOH! HOW WILL WE GET PAST THAT?
HOW, INDEED?
TUNNELING UNDER THE FORTRESS IS TAKING TOO LONG!
SORRY BUT I LEFT MY DIRT-ORIENTED SPELLBOOK AT HOME. BESIDES, MOST OF ITS INCANTATIONS ARE FOR LAWN CARE.
GUYS, MY MUSCLES WORK BEST WHEN I'M LIFTING, NOT SHOVELING! I'M POOPED!
FINE. LET A REAL MAN SHOW YOU HOW TO DIG!
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T SEE EVERY DAY, CHAUNCY.
WHAT'S THAT, EDGAR?
MOLES WITH METALWORKING SKILLS.
THE UNDERDARK PRESENTS AN UNUSUAL SIGHT...
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL PLACE!
IT'S SO TRANQUIL.
IT'S AN ILLUSION.
HOW DID YOU KNOW?
BITTER EXPERIENCE AND HENCHMAN'S INTUITION.
DARNIT, PIFFANY HOW LONG IS THAT PURIFY SIGHT SPELL GOING TO LAST?!
HISS! PREPARE FOR ETERNAL SLUMBER!
YOU WILL TASTE THE DEADLY KISS OF THE SUCCUBUS YOU WEAK--
--LOVABLE MAN! WHAT A DARLING NOSE YOU HAVE!
ER... HUH?
UH, SILUSSA? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I'M SORRY, BELEGOS, BUT I CHOOSE MY LOVERS FOR THEIR MIGHTY NOSES, AND I'M AFRAID HE'S GOT YOU BEAT!
PIF? HOW SHOULD WE SAVE NODWICK FROM THAT DEMONESS?
I THINK NODWICK MAY SAVE HER! SHE MAY BE EVIL, BUT NODWICK HAS FOUND A WAY INTO HER HEART! MAYBE HIS GOOD-NATURED WAYS CAN TURN HER AWAY FROM A LIFE OF NAUGHTINESS AND ICKY-WRONG DEEDS!
UM, CAN I GET A SUCCUBUS, TOO?
KEEP DREAMING.
OKAY, SO WHAT DO WE DO WITH VAMPIRE-BOY HERE?
LEAVE! I'VE ALREADY HAD A STAKE DRIVEN THROUGH MY HEART!
I'LL WRITE YOU, BELEGOS!
SURRRE, YOU WILL...
SO, DO YOU NEED ANY DATING ADVICE?
THAT, AND A "DO-IT-YOURSELF EXORCISM KIT"...

BEHOLD, MORTALS! THE PASSAGE TO THE VAULT OF THE DROW, GUARDED BY THE DARK TOWER!
HMM... THAT TOWER LOOKS... DIPPY.
I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S THE WORD I'D CHOOSE.
I GUESS WE HAVE TO GO IN.
OUR HEROES ARE GIVEN A LESSON IN DROW LAW...
YOU MUST WEAR THESE LIME GREEN CLOAKS AT ALL TIMES. IF YOU REFUSE, YOU WILL BE KILLED.
YOU MUST ALSO NOT HIDE THE AMUSING TEXT EMBROIDERED ON THE BACK. IF YOU DO, YOU WILL BE KILLED.
I'M WITH STUPID
BRAIN DONOR
AND THEN TRAVEL TO THE HEART OF THE VAULT.
LOOK, MY LARGE-NOSED LOVE: THIS IS THE LESSER TEMPLE, BEYOND WHICH LIES THE UNHOLIEST OF DROW PLACES!
I THINK A PLAN MAY BE IN ORDER, FOLKS.
WARNING: TRESSPASSERS WILL BE USED AS SPIDER CHOW
LATER...
I CAN PUT SOME BAIT TRAPS DOWN; THAT SHOULD TAKE CARE OF ANY STRAGGLERS.
JUST BILL THIS TO THE DROW PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT.
I WONDER IF HE COULD SPRAY YOUR BOOTS WHILE HE'S AT IT.
YOU'RE LUCKY THAT YOUR GIRLFRIEND IS HERE!
FINALLY, THE GREATEST EVIL OF THE UNDERDARK IS REVEALED... LOLTH!!
AH, LUNCH HAS ARRIVED! I HOPE YOU'RE ALL LOW IN FAT AND CHOLESTEROL!
WE'RE GOING TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU AREN'T GOING TO SPIN YOUR WEBS OF ICKY-BADNESS ANYMORE!
THAT WAS ALMOST A GOOD LINE. SHE'S LEARNING!
HAH! YOUR FEEBLE POWERS ARE NO MATCH FOR MY--
SILUSSA? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
HOW DO YOU KNOW MY-- LOLTHERYN? LOLTHERYN-VICTORIA, IS THAT YOU?
YOU KNOW HER?
OH, YEAH! THIS IS LOLTHERYN FROM EPSILON-GAMMA-GAMMA SORORITY AT ABYSS U! WE'RE SORORITY SISTERS! I DIDN'T KNOW SHE'D SHORTENED HER NAME AND BECOME A GODDESS!
SO WHO ARE YOUR FRIENDS? YOU MUST INTRODUCE ME!
WELL, THAT'S NODWICK, MY BOYFRIEND. HE'S--
YOU'RE DATING A HENCHMAN? HOW EMBARASSING!
HE'S A HENCHMAN? REALLY?
OH, SWEETIE, IT'S SO OBVIOUS...
I'M SORRY, NODWICK, BUT I HAVE AN INFERNAL REPUTATION TO KEEP UP. I'LL WRITE YOU.
SURRRE YOU WILL...
IT LOOKS LIKE WE CAN EITHER FOLLOW THEM TO LOLTH'S LAIR IN THE ABYSS, OR...
...WE CAN GO BACK TO THE SURFACE, RIGHT THROUGH ALL OF THE DROW, KUO-TOA AND GIANTS WE TICKED OFF ALONG THE WAY.
HALF OF WHOM YEAGAR MOONED AS WE PASSED!
I WAS TRYING TO CREATIVELY SHOW MY CONTEMPT FOR THEIR EVIL WAYS... BESIDES, I HEAR THAT THE ABYSS IS LOVELY THIS TIME OF YEAR.
END?



Arcane Lore

Alister's Augmentation's

by Owen K.C. Stephens • illustration by Anthony Waters

Young adventurers are often inspired by tales of heroes from ages past, but few hear stories of Alister Honorcalled, a long-deceased half-elven wizard. This omission might seem odd, given the many accomplishments of Honorcalled, for stories place him in the center of many important battles over the past 150 years. Despite Alister's obvious experience and power, the warriors traveling with him are the ones who usually become immortalized in song and legend. Only wizened sages note that these warriors' greatest victories occurred while Alister was nearby, and that most of them faded into insignificance after parting his company.

The recent discovery of several of Alister's spellbooks sheds light on this mystery. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Alister felt that the best use of a spellcaster's power was not a flashy *fireball* or conjuration. Instead, he believed that it was important for all types of spellcasters to augment the abilities and talents of those around him.

Alister's spellbooks reflect this philosophy and are filled with magics designed to enhance the effectiveness of others. Many of these spells are unique to Alister's books and are presumably the product of his own research. Three of these books, *Alister's Book of Battle, Alister's Book of Honor,* and the *Book of War* have recently been found, and copies of the spells within them have begun to circulate. The books themselves never seem to remain with a particular owner for long, and they are often lost in battle or stolen shortly after their acquisition.

Alister's Book of Battle and *Alister's Book of Honor* are described as being similar in appearance. Both are large tomes 3 feet high, 1 foot wide, and 4 inches thick. Their covers are made of thin sheets of hammered steel. The *Book of Battle* bears the image of etched swords and the *Book of Honor,* etched crowns. Heavy steel rings bind the covers to pages of fine linen, with the lettering brushed on in colored paints. Although many wizards who have studied these books believe the coloring is some kind of code, no one has deciphered it yet.

The *Book of War* is reportedly a much smaller book, measuring only 6 inches high, 4 inches wide, and 2 inches thick. Although also covered in steel plates and bound by steel rings, the *Book of War* shows none of the etching or colored lettering of the other tomes. It is a simple and utilitarian book covered with dents and rusted scars on the cover that suggest it has seen much hard use. The elven word *maletril* is written in tiny letters on one of the steel binding rings. Maletril means "war dancer," and it is impossible to open the *Book of War* without first saying the word in either elven or common.

The spells in *Alister's Book of Battle* are fairly common and include *cat's grace, courage, darkvision, dispel magic, endurance, enlarge, haste, jump, keen edge, mage armor, magic weapon, minor globe of invulnerability, phantom steed, protection from arrows, stoneskin,* and *bull's strength.*

Alister's Book of Honor contains a collection of spells unknown from any other source and thus are presumed to be Alister's own creations. These include *bristle, diamond-steel, dolorous blow, hurl, lesser spell immunity, shieldbearer,* and *weapon shift.*

The *Book of War* contains the unique spells *battle hymn, burning sword, heroics, mass strength, rapid strike,* and *indomitability.* All the unique spells found in these works are detailed below.

Mass Strength

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./level)
Target or Targets: Up to one creature per 2 levels, all within a 30-foot radius
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (Harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (Harmless)

This spell grants additional Strength to one creature per 2 levels of the caster. The affected creatures gain 1d4+1 points of Strength, adding the usual benefits to melee attack rolls, melee damage rolls, Strength-related skill checks, and so on.

Material component: A few hairs from any kind of giant.

Weapon Shift

Transmutation
Level: Brd 2, Sor/Wiz 1
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: One weapon
Duration: 5 minutes/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The *weapon shift* spell allows the caster to temporarily transform any one nonmagic melee weapon (of up to Large size) into a different melee weapon of the same size or smaller. Thus, a greatclub could be transformed into a greatsword, or a light pick into a morning star. Magic, ranged, improvised, and Huge or larger weapons cannot be targeted or created with this spell.

Material component: a piece of parchment folded into the shape of the weapon type desired.

Rapid Strikes

Transmutation
Level: Brd 2, Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (Harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (Harmless)

A creature targeted by *rapid strikes* performs more quickly in combat. This gives the target one extra partial action each round that can only be used to perform a single melee attack at the attacker's best attack bonus. Unlike the spell *haste*, the extra action can be used only to attack; there is no increase in speed, AC, or additional non-attack actions.

Burning Sword

Evocation
Level: Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Weapon touched
Duration: 2 minutes/level (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

A weapon enchanted with a *burning sword* spell is engulfed in flickering blue flames that shed azure light out to 30 feet. These flames do not harm the weapon or its wielder, but for the duration of the spell it delivers fire damage in addition to its normal damage.

The enchanted weapon deals +1d6 points of fire damage on a successful hit. Also, on a critical hit, the weapon inflicts additional fire damage based on the weapon's critical hit multiplier:

Critical Hit Multiplier	Additional Fire Damage
×2	+1d10
×3	+2d10
×4	+3d10

This spell may be cast on arrows and crossbow bolts. Upon a successful hit, the arrow or bolt inflicts its fire damage as appropriate, then loses its enchantment.

Diamondsteel

Transmutation
Level: Brd 4, Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Touch
Target: Suit of metal armor touched
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

Diamondsteel enhances the strength of one suit of metal armor. This adds a +1 hardness bonus to the AC of light and medium metal armors (such as a chain shirt, scale mail, chainmail, or a breastplate), as well as increasing the armor's own hardness value by 2. See the section on attacking objects in the combat chapter of the *Player's Handbook* (page 135). All heavy metal armors (such as splint mail, banded mail, half-plate, and full plate) gain a +2 hardness bonus to AC and have their own hardness values increased by 3.

Material component: diamond dust worth at least 100 gp.

NEW SPELLS

1ST-LEVEL

Trans	**Shieldbearer** Animates a shield to hover near and protect one creature.
Trans	**Weapon Shift** Temporarily transforms one type of weapon into another.

2ND-LEVEL

Trans	**Bristle** Causes one suit of armor to grow spikes.
Abjur	**Lesser Spell Immunity** Protects recipient from one spell.
Trans	**Hurl** Grants a weapon the power to return once thrown.
Trans	**Rapid Strikes** Increases the recipient's attack actions in battle.

3RD-LEVEL

Ench	**Battle Hymn** Creates a martial song that inspires the caster's allies.
Trans	**Diamondsteel** Temporarily hardens one suit of armor.

4TH-LEVEL

Trans	**Burning Sword** Transforms one weapon into a flaming burst weapon.
Trans	**Dolorous Blow** Increases the power of one weapon's critical hits.
Trans	**Heroics** Grants a fighter temporary use of an additional heroic feat.

5TH-LEVEL

Abjur	**Indomitability** Allows the recipient to delay the effect of one incapacitating blow.

6TH-LEVEL

Trans	**Mass Strength** Greatly increases the Strength of several creatures for a short time.

Shieldbearer

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Shield touched
Duration: 2 rounds/level
Saving throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The *shieldbearer* spell allows a spellcaster to enchant one shield so that it hovers near and attempts to protect one creature of the caster's choice. The spell's recipient is chosen at the time of casting and cannot be changed. The enchanted shield remains within 1 foot of the creature for the duration of the spell. The shield's target is then granted an AC bonus as if she was wearing the shield. (Bonuses from multiple shields do not stack.) The spell does, however, allow the enchanted shield's target to use a two-handed weapon or a weapon in each hand.

A creature cannot be the target of more than one *shieldbearer* spell at a time

Lesser Spell Immunity

Abjuration
Level: Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (Harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (Harmless)

A weaker version of *spell immunity,* this spell protects one creature from a single 1st- or 2nd-level spell. The creature effectively has unbeatable Spell Resistance regarding the chosen spell. *Lesser spell immunity* can't protect a creature from a spell to which Spell Resistance doesn't apply. This spell works against other spells, spell-like effects, and innate spell-like abilities. It does not protect against supernatural or extraordinary abilities, such as breath weapons or gaze attacks. Only a particular spell can be protected against, not a sphere of spells or a group of spells with similar effects; thus, a creature given immunity to *magic missile* is still vulnerable to *Melf's acid arrow.*

A creature can have only one *lesser spell immunity* or *spell immunity* in effect at a time.

Heroics

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

The *heroics* spell temporarily grants a fighter a feat from the fighter's bonus feat list. For the duration of the *heroics* spell, the fighter can use the feat as if it were one of those she had selected. Only a character with at least one fighter class level can be the recipient of this spell. All prerequisites for the feat must be met by the target of this spell.

A fighter can be the target of only one *heroics* spell at a time.

Material component: a bit of a weapon or armor that has been used in combat by a fighter of at least 15th level.

Battle Hymn

Enchantment (Charm) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Brd 3, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: 30 ft.
Targets: All allies within 30 ft.
Duration: 1 round/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (Harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (Harmless)

This spell brings forth a stirring martial tune that inspires all creatures within the area who are friendly to the caster. These creatures gain a +2 morale bonus to all Will saving throws for the duration of the spell. The caster gains no bonus from his own *battle hymn,* even if he is within the area of effect.

Dolorous Blow

Transmutation
Level: Brd 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Weapon touched
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

A weapon affected by *dolorous blow* glows with a dull red aura. For the duration of the spell, the weapon's threat range is doubled, and its critical hits automatically succeed (no confirmation roll is required).

Bristle

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Suit of armor touched
Duration: 1 minute/level (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The *bristle* spell temporarily enchants one suit of armor, causing it to grow long hard spikes that stick out in all directions. This spell does not work on clothing other than armor, but it does function with armor that already has spikes built in. The spikes are flexible enough not to hamper the creature wearing the armor. Each round, the first time the armor wearer attacks a target in melee 1d4 spikes strike out as well (as a melee attack), growing in length and hardness. The spikes have a total attack bonus equal to the spellcasting level of the caster (no other bonuses apply). Each spike does 1d4 points of damage. The spikes never score a critical hit.

Indomitability

Abjuration
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes (Harmless)

The *indomitability* spell protects its recipient from the first incapacitating attack he suffers during the spell's duration. An incapacitating attack is one that would reduce the recipient to less than 1 hp. The attack must be one that deals damage; the staying spell offers no protection from non-damaging effects or attacks that kill or destroy without dealing any damage, such as the *disintegrate* or *slay living* spell. Regardless of how much damage the attack deals, the recipient of the *indomitability* spell takes only enough damage to be reduced to 1 hp. The remaining damage from the attack is delayed until the end of the spell's duration. The recipient can be healed before the spell ends, but nothing short of a *wish* or *miracle* spell can prevent the delayed damage from being dealt when the *indomitability* spell expires.

Hurl

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 2
Components: V, S, M (F)
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Weapon touched
Duration: 1 minute/level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

The *hurl* spell enchants one melee weapon so that it will return to the thrower after being thrown. For the duration of the spell, when thrown, the weapon returns to its wielder at the beginning of his next action. The weapon returns whether it hit or missed its target. On its return, the thrown weapon hovers for 1 round next to the wielder and can then be seized and thrown again. After 1 round, the weapon falls to the ground. The weapon only returns to its wielder if thrown; it doesn't automatically fly back if dropped or seized by another creature. (An improvised weapon or a weapon not designed for throwing has a range increment of 10 feet.) Only weapons of up to Large size can be targeted by this spell. Thus, a greatsword could be enchanted by *hurl,* but the spell has no effect on a ballista bolt or a huge boulder.

Material component: a bit of wood or leather from a throwing axe or spear.

Bazaar of the Bizarre

Armor of Virtue

by Johnathan M. Richards • illustrated by Arnie Swekel

There's no doubt that a holy avenger is a paladin's greatest weapon. Such a weapon has special powers available only to members of the paladin class. Many previous works provide paladin characters with new holy swords, but the paladin's staunchest ally is often overlooked.

A paladin is expected to be on the front line in battle and therefore will need the very best armor she can obtain. Most of the suits of armor described below have special powers available only to paladins, but any PC whose class allows her to wear armor should derive at least some benefit from them. However, each of these suits of armor was created for a specific order of paladins, and any "unauthorized" PC caught wearing one might find herself the target of retribution.

The DM can insert these suits of armor into a campaign by several means. The armor might belong to a PC's church and be loaned out to members of the order for a worthy occasion (granting a paladin the Drachensgaard armor when she is sent out to slay a dragon, for instance). Maybe a paladin wearing the armor was sent out on a quest and hasn't been heard from since. The PCs could be sent to investigate the paladin's disappearance with instructions to obtain the armor and return it to the church. Perhaps the holy armor is worn by someone unable to employ (or unaware of) its true power. The PCs' first encounter with a set of holy armor could be when they face that person in combat!

Finally, a paladin's order might be planning to bestow a suit of the holy armor upon one of their members. Through the successful completion of a series of quests, a high-level paladin could "earn" one of the suits of armor and become one of the few in the history of the order to prove worthy of such an honor.

However the armor is introduced into the campaign, it's unlikely that it would show up as a treasure in some creature's lair. The orders for which they were created keep a close eye on the whereabouts of such powerful items.

Drachensgaard

Drachensgaard is a suit of *+1 full plate.* It has been enchanted to provide the following additional powers to paladins:

- Grants a +2 resistance bonus against dragons' breath weapons that require a Reflex save.
- Allows the wearer to understand and speak Draconic while worn.
- When the wearer utters a command word, crampons project from the boots of the armor to aid the wearer in climbing the rocky cliffs and icy mountains where many dragons lair. The magic crampons grant the paladin a +2 competence bonus to his Climb skill checks.

Drachensgaard has often been worn by paladins who devoted their lives to the destruction of evil dragons. It was created by the wizard Thurgas "Dragondoom" Dorrn for his companion and fellow dragonslayer Justinian Graevis. Since Justinian's death at the claws of an ancient red dragon, Drachensgaard has been passed down to various paladins of his order, but the armor works perfectly well for any paladin.

Caster Level: 6th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, endure elements, tongues; *Market Price:* 11,000; *Cost to create:* 5,500 gp + 440 XP.

Name	Armor	Armor Bonus	Maximum Dex Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure	Speed (30 ft.)	Speed (20 ft.)	Weight
Drachensgaard	*+1 Full plate*	+9	+1	-5	35%	20 ft.	15 ft.	50 lb.
Hellshield	*+3 Full plate*	+11	+1	-5	35%	20 ft.	15 ft.	50 lb.
Humillianthir	*+3 Leather and barding*	+5	+3	0	10%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb./30 lb.
Praesidium Luminata	*+1 Full plate*	+9	+1	-5	35%	20 ft.	15 ft.	50 lb.
Spellcease	*+1 Full plate*	+9	+1	-5	35%	20 ft.	15 ft.	50 lb.
Truedeath	*+1 Full plate*	+9	+1	-5	35%	20 ft.	15 ft.	50 lb.

Hellshield

Hellshield is a suit of *+3 full plate* that was crafted to allow a paladin to bring the war against the fiends to their home ground.

- Hellshield provides its wearer with the ability to exist unharmed in extreme environments. A paladin so outfitted is granted fire resistance 25 and cold resistance 25.
- The wearer gains a +4 insight bonus to Sense Motive checks versus evil Outsiders. This power allows the paladin to better ignore the glib lies, silken seductions, and false promises of the evil creatures he has been sent to destroy.

Hellshield was crafted by the wizard Armadane for the paladin Cornelius Borugon, a devout follower of Heironeous who dedicated his life to the destruction of fiends. Cornelius was slain by the blade of a beautiful assassin in the service of a demon lord; while he readily saw the evils of the demonic and diabolic races, he often turned a blind eye to the evil members of his own race.

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *detect thoughts, protection from elements; Market Price:* 25,000; *Cost to Create:* 12,500 gp + 1,000 XP.

Humillianthir

Because of the strong ties between a paladin and his bonded mount, a special type of armor was developed for both. Collectively known as Humillianthir ("The Armor-Bond between Horse and Master" in Elven), it consists of a suit of armor for the paladin and a set of barding for the mount. The barding has a saddle built into its design. Both pieces were created at the same time by the elven sorceress Aelleanna for her brother, the paladin Caldeth, and his warhorse, Silverhooves. This is one of the few examples of leather holy armor.

Humillianthir is a suit of *+3 leather armor* for the rider and *+3 leather barding* for the horse. Details on barding can be found on page 112 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Using a move-equivalent action the paladin can teleport onto his mount and be ready for battle. There are restrictions to this power:

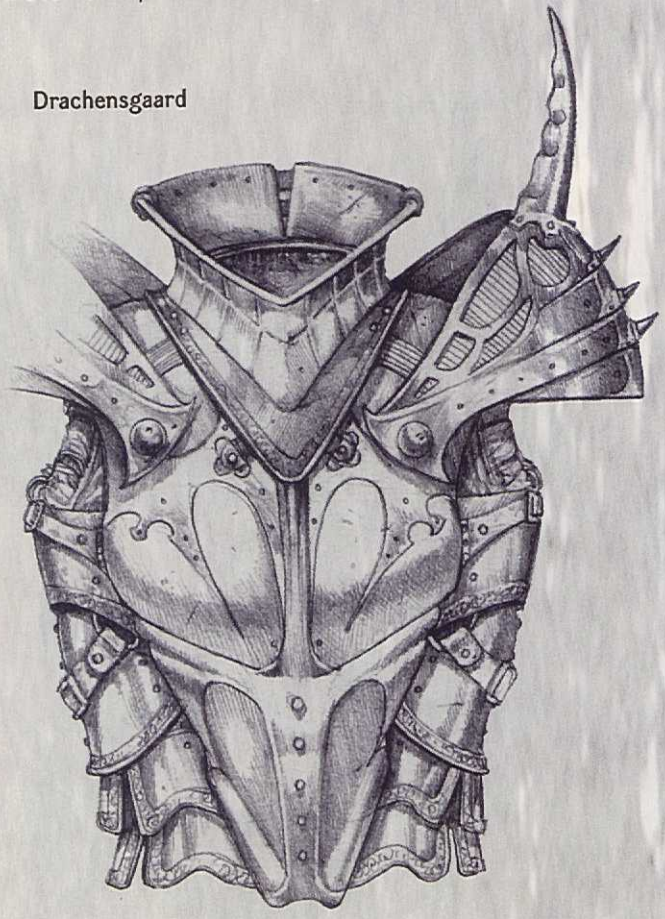
- First, the paladin must be within 500 feet of his mount.
- The teleportation occurs only if both horse and rider are wearing their armor.
- The mount cannot be carrying someone else in the saddle.
- The *teleport without error* power functions only for a paladin and his bonded mount, but a normal mount or non-paladin PC can still gain the benefit of the armor's magical protection.
- The paladin cannot use Humillianthir to teleport off of his mount.

If either the paladin's armor or the mount's barding is destroyed, the remaining half of the set loses its *teleport without error* power (although it still functions as *+3 leather armor* or *+3 leather barding*). Damaged or destroyed Humillianthir barding cannot be replaced with new barding; a completely new set of both barding and armor would have to be fashioned.

Because of its light weight, Humillianthir can be placed upon any large-sized aerial steed such as a pegasus, griffon, or hippogriff. A paladin with a flying mount and Humillianthir can leap from his saddle in midair, knock an enemy rider from his flying mount, and then teleport to the safety of his own saddle while his enemy hurtles to the ground below.

Caster Level: 13th; Prerequisites: Enchant arms and armor, teleport without error; Market Price: 21,000; Cost to Create: 10,500 gp + 840 XP.

Drachensgaard



Hellshield

Praesidium Luminata

This suit of *+1 full plate* glows with a holy light when worn by a paladin. This light is a manifestation of the purity and goodness inherent in the paladin and her deity. It provides illumination as bright as daylight within a 30-foot radius and has the following additional magical effects:

- All good-aligned creatures within 30 feet of the paladin gain a +1 morale bonus to their attack rolls.
- All evil aligned beings within 30 feet of the paladin suffer a -1 morale penalty to their attack rolls.
- Creatures with the light sensitivity special quality suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to hit while within the radius of illumination.
- The light reveals all invisible creatures within 30 feet of the paladin. Such creatures become visible to anyone, not just the paladin.
- The light reveals all forms of magical shapeshifting by superimposing an image, visible to anyone, of the shapeshifting creature's original form over its current guise. While the creature is within 30 feet of the paladin, both its original and current form are visible in a kind of double image. This double image vanishes once the creature attacks or is attacked by someone within the light's range. Note that the power of the armor's light does not force a physical change in the shapeshifter; it merely allows everyone to see the creature as it really is. Furthermore, as soon as the creature exits the radius of illumination, the image of its original form vanishes.

In addition, a magical power makes the armor easier to don. By placing the helm upon her head and invoking the name of Heironeous while mentally willing the action, the paladin can teleport the rest of Praesidium Luminata onto her body. The teleporting power can only be used if the armor is within 10 feet of the paladin. Summoning the armor is a standard action.

The Praesidium Luminata was crafted by the wizard Bombulio for the paladin Shiornna Ravenstorm after she saved his life and his tower from a magical assault by the forces of Hextor.

A non-paladin wearing Praesidium Luminata cannot activate any of its magical powers, though the armor still functions as *+1 full plate.*

Caster Level: 9th; *Prerequisites:* Create Magic Arms and Armor, *teleport without error, prayer, bless, daylight, true seeing; Market Price:* 24,000; *Cost to Create:* 12,000 gp + 960 XP.

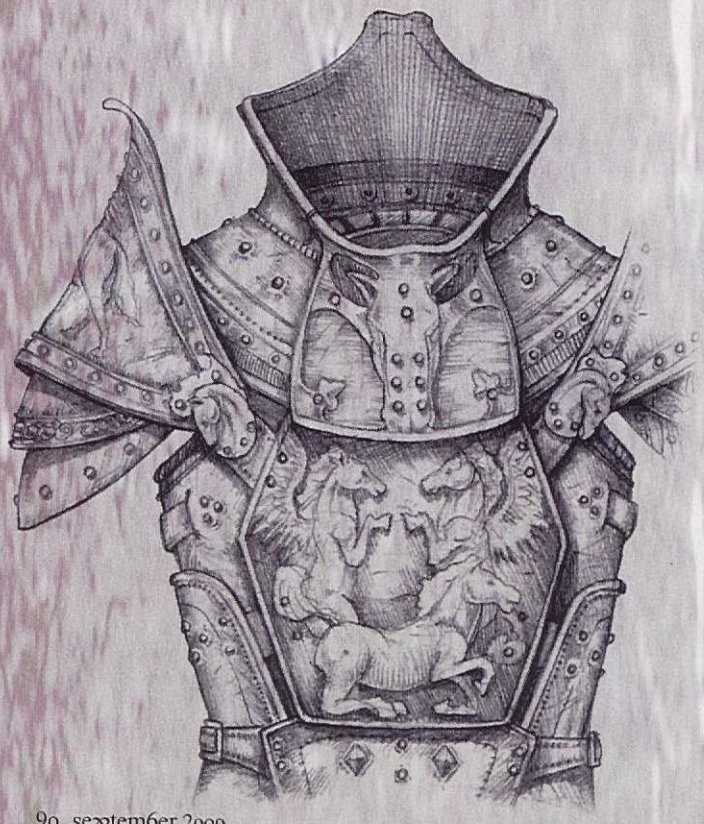
Spellcease

This armor is an invaluable tool in the fight against evil spellcasters. Spellcease is a suit of *+1 full plate.*

- It automatically absorbs 1d4+2x10 spell levels of "evil" magic. Evil magic is defined as baneful spells and magical effects cast by spellcasters of evil alignment. Thus, Spellcease absorbs *magic missile* or *charm person* spells cast by an evil wizard, but not a *detect magic* spell cast by the same wizard. Similarly, it does not absorb spells cast by spellcasters of non-evil alignment.
- Spellcease has a final power accessible only to paladins: regardless of level, the wearer can cast the *holy sword* spell once per day.

Spellcease was created by Volifume Phormeidul, a wizard long associated with various paladin orders. (It has been rumored that Volifume also crafted the holy swords Trueoath, Helmsplitter, and Demongrief.) Mounted into the chestpiece of the armor in a "V" pattern are five ellipsoid gemstones. Each gem is a deep

Humillianthir



Praesidium Luminata

purple and glows with an internal power of its own.

When the armor absorbs its full limit of spell levels, the five stones burn out and the armor is unable to absorb further evil magic (although it remains *+1 full plate*). Volifume was able to "recharge" the Spellcease armor by replacing the stones; unfortunately, that process was lost when the wizard died. If he left any notes detailing the process, they have yet to be found; therefore, Spellcease cannot be recharged, but it can be used by any PC allowed to wear armor.

Caster Level: 13th, plus a 15th-level paladin; *Prerequisites:* Create Magic Arms and Armor, Create Wondrous Item, *greater spell immunity, holy sword; Market Price:* 40,000; *Cost to Create:* 20,000 gp + 1,600 XP.

Truedeath

This armor was designed for Sir Michael Pellingrove of Battlebarrow, a paladin dedicated to the destruction of all forms of undead, by the wizard Vhandal Deathsbane, who shared his calling. A set of *+1 full plate,* Truedeath has the symbol of Sir Michael's order sculpted on the chest plate.

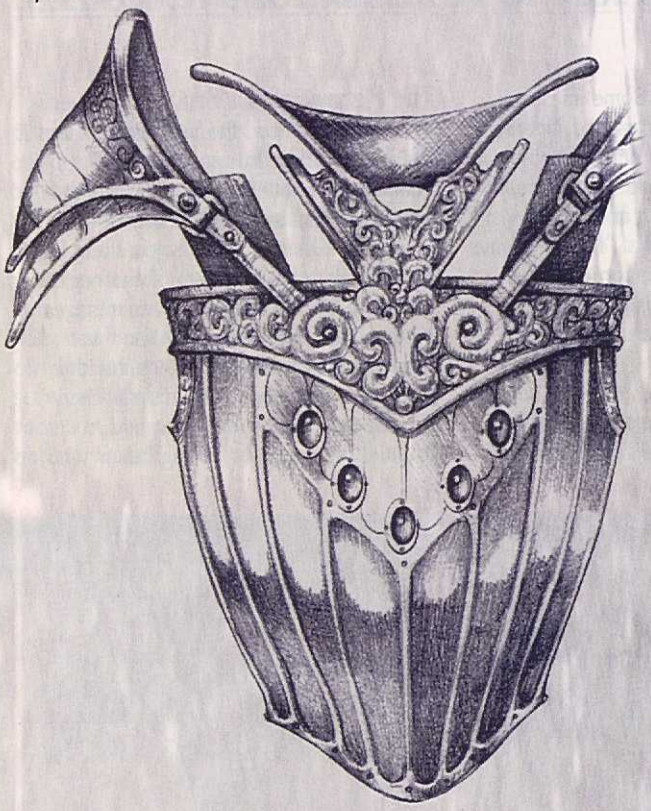
- When the armor is worn, this symbol glows in the presence of undead, alerting the paladin when such a creature is within 50 feet.The paladin can use the symbol to turn undead. This is not automatic, and requires the paladin's complete concentration, just as if the paladin was using his holy symbol to make a normal turning attempt. A paladin using this power turns undead as a cleric of one level lower than his own, rather than two levels lower as is normally the case.
- Truedeath was magically bonded to a font of holy water at Sir Michael's church. As long as the font remains filled, any corporeal undead creature coming in contact with the magic armor is affected as if doused with holy water: The foul being suffers 2d4 points of damage as its flesh (or bone) burns where the contact was made. When this occurs, the holy water in the font at the church boils and bubbles. After 1d4+4 such uses, the holy water must be replenished in the font, or this power stops functioning, and remains dormant until the font is refilled.
- The wearer of Truedeath is immune to magical aging effects from undead attacks.

Because each of the various paladin orders have different symbols, Truedeath is fully useful only to a member of the order for which it was made. The undead detection ability works only for an active believer of the order's faith, so a cleric from the same faith can wear it and use all of the armor's benefits (including turning at one level higher than normal), but a fighter from another faith (even a different lawful good religion) or a paladin of a different god gains only the protection from the magical aging powers of undead and the caustic holy water effect for as long as the font stays filled. The DM should determine the specific paladin order to which Sir Michael belonged.

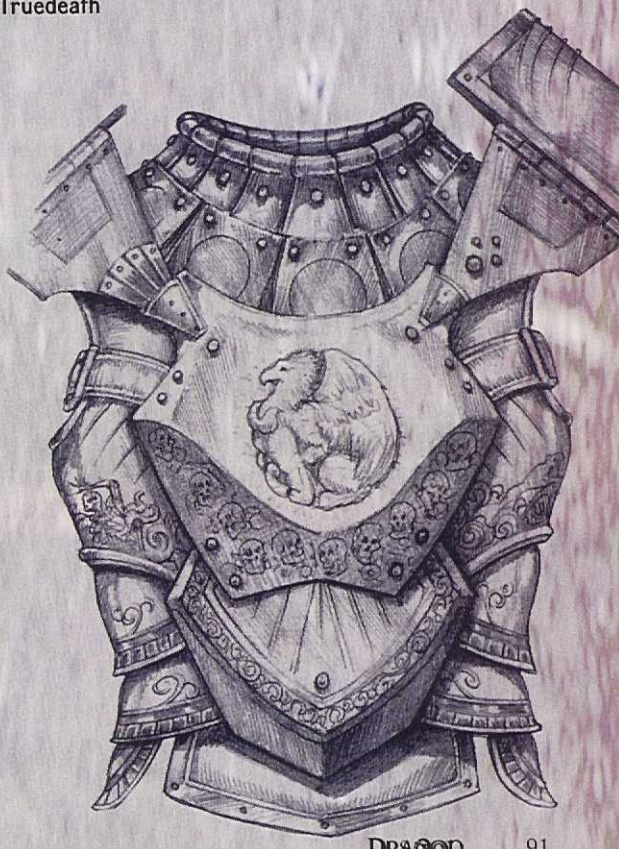
The name "Truedeath" refers to the laying to rest of the tortured souls that have become undead, many against their will. Sir Michael Pellingrove had compassion for those unfortunates who had entered such a state unwillingly; for those like the lich, who meticulously planned and orchestrated their own undeath, he had nothing but the edge of his blade and the burning power of his god's fury.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Create Magic Arms and Armor, *detect undead, bless water; Market Price:* 26,000; *Cost to Create:* 13,000 gp + 1,040 XP.

Spellcease



Truedeath



The Adventures of VOLO the Crumbling Stair

by Ed Greenwood • illustrated by Barbara Barion

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like hot buttered snails steaming in green Valgrath wine! This day I write of a ruin of the Sword Coast North many have heard of, but few know about beyond the impression of mystery and deceit imparted by the Waterdhavian expression "as curious' as the Crumbling Stair."

What All Know And The Eye Beholds

Well-learned folk know the Stair to be a ruin that stands in what some call "the Sword Hills," a lawless, brigand-infested hill country east of Waterdeep, betwixt Ardeep Forest and Uluvin.

Some in the City of Splendors and places nearby (such as Amphail) can also recall fanciful nursery tales of elves dancing with unicorns and pegasi in the air by night around a glowing ruined stone stair in the wooded wilderness. Some might have also heard tales of the humans foolish enough to join the dance who were spirited away and changed in wits and powers, to be human no more.[2]

Merchants, drovers, adventurers, and a few brigands know it to be a broken marble staircase that rises in a grand, curving sweep up out of treacherous, pit-filled ground that's obviously the overgrown foundation of a once magnificent building. A mansion of the Fallen Kingdom, most folk think—and most also believe that the Stair is haunted.

I can now report that I have seen this ghost with my own eyes[3] and can swear to the utter truth of this belief.

The ghost of a slain knight strikes at those who try to camp near, ascend, or descend the staircase. Sometimes, this apparition is a phantom sword, floating alone, or a helm, or an actual ghost. Whatever its true nature or powers, it always glows, flickers in and out of visibility, and its insubstantial "touch" always brings a sickening sensation of weariness and utter, bone-chilling cold (though such contact seems to do no damage to the flesh).[4]

The ghost slays some, is never seen by others, and menaces most who venture near the Stair until they withdraw in fear or exasperation. Its origin remains mysterious, although many claim that it is the remains of this or that mage-cursed warrior or suchlike.

Know that I, Volo, have parted many curtains of mystery and folk-falsehood to lay bare for all readers many truths of this beautiful wilderland site.

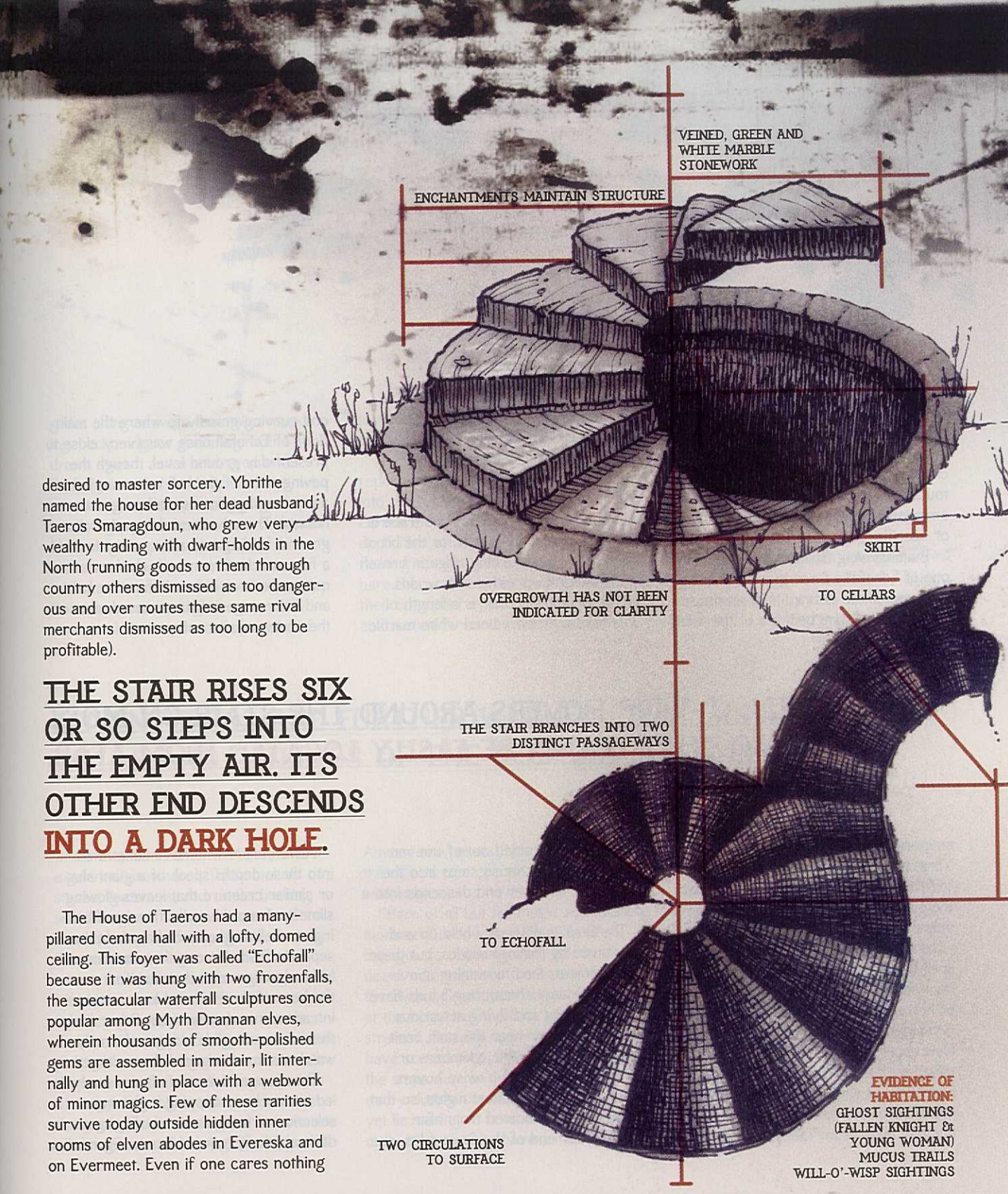
THE GHOST OF A SLAIN KNIGHT STRIKES AT THOSE WHO TRY TO CAMP NEAR, ASCEND, OR DESCEND THE STAIRCASE. SOMETIMES, THIS APPARITION IS A PHANTOM SWORD...

The History of the Stair

This ruin was once the site of Taeros, a grand mansion adorned with many turrets, set in wooded gardens adorned with fountains and pools stocked with jewelfish.[5] The house sprawled along a curving ridge in the heart of the region known as Loravatha, in the realm sages now call the Fallen Kingdom, and was home to the human sorceress Ybrithe. She spent her late husband's merchant fortune building the mansion and founded a school for young lasses who

ELMINSTER'S NOTES

1. **Ye would say** "fishy" instead of "curious" here. American English (and isn't that an oxymoron?) is such an amusing tongue, if rather overly steeped in sarcasm.
2. **Such romantic tales** are based on a true incident involving humans intruding on a service of worship to Lurue. I'm not at liberty to say what became of the humans, but I will reveal to ye that they live yet, far beyond their normal lifespans, and now regret nothing of their boldness, though their fate was regarded at the time of infliction, by both themselves and the worshippers, as a punishment.
3. **Ahem;** our diligent scribe somehow neglects to inform ye readers that his eyes were protruding in utter terror from his backside at the time, as he fled (with a swiftness that would do credit to a roused stallion) in the general direction of the Sea of Swords. Had several dozen trees of Ardeep Forest not stood in his path, he might well have found the waiting waves of that handy ocean. Let it never be forgotten that our Volo is a brave man. (We've no excuse for doing so, given the frequency with which he reminds us of this. Sufficient unto the common need, indeed.)
4. **Volo here stumbles** into being correct. The chill does no physical harm and has actually warned sleeping sentinels to defend themselves against stealthily-approaching brigands or goblinkin raiding bands. It might spur nightmares to trouble the dreams of some sleepers and has a more lasting effect on some: Contact with this phantom, which



desired to master sorcery. Ybrithe named the house for her dead husband Taeros Smaragdoun, who grew very wealthy trading with dwarf-holds in the North (running goods to them through country others dismissed as too dangerous and over routes these same rival merchants dismissed as too long to be profitable).

THE STAIR RISES SIX OR SO STEPS INTO THE EMPTY AIR. ITS OTHER END DESCENDS INTO A DARK HOLE.

The House of Taeros had a many-pillared central hall with a lofty, domed ceiling. This foyer was called "Echofall" because it was hung with two frozenfalls, the spectacular waterfall sculptures once popular among Myth Drannan elves, wherein thousands of smooth-polished gems are assembled in midair, lit internally and hung in place with a webwork of minor magics. Few of these rarities survive today outside hidden inner rooms of elven abodes in Evereska and on Evermeet. Even if one cares nothing

is the fading remnant of some mage of the Fallen Kingdom altered by his own over-reaching spells (the "true ghost" also seen here is someone else linked to the Stair by other deeds), awakens in some persons the power to receive, henceforth in their lives, visions of things past. Such visions are unpredictable and uncontrollable, but they are almost always vivid, accurate, and spurred either by proximity to a relic or place, or by the awakening or stirring of something long hidden, silent, dead, or undead.

Most are troubled by such a talent, but some have made a career of employing it.

5. **Then, as now, jewelfish** were things of fashion, employed by the idle rich as living decorations. They are tiny, inedible iridescent silvery fish whose scales can be dyed to take on vivid metallic hues. The popularity of this practice died out long ago, and only a few guild crafters of Waterdeep, Neverwinter, Memnon, and Esmeltaran still have complete particulars of the procedure, and then only in dusty books. Jewelfish look attractive in large numbers, swirling and darting in graceful unison, but have a habit of dying en masse whenever the weather grows too hot, and stink thereafter like, well, dead fish.
6. **Frozenfalls were much more** than Volo realizes. They were often the foci for minor house mythals, governing the building in which they were located, or housing the vigilant sentiences of family ancestors who lingered, like baelnorn, to watch over their descendants, guarding and

for their beauty, the component gems are worth staggering amounts. The most valuable frozenfalls are ensorceled to chime softly and musically when touched, on contact with the rising sun or moonlight, or with any other general or specific magical enchantments.[6]

The surviving Stair is thought to be one of Echofall's three grand ascending staircases, kept aloft in its precarious and decaying state because of the many supportive spells practiced upon it by Ybrithe's students.

After twenty-odd seasons of peace, the mansion was attacked one night by unknown mages bent on seizing what magic they could. In the fierce spell-battle that ensued, the house was torn apart, destroying Ybrithe and most of her apprentices. A trap (or perhaps a *contingency* spell linked to her death) blew apart most of the ridge soon after, taking the attacking wizards with it. Fearful elves who dwelt in the forests nearby kept the curious (and magic-hungry) away from Taeros for years until the kingdom failed and the land became wilderness overrun by a succession of goblinkin[7] raiders.

The Stair Today

Adventurers today will find no trace of the grand mansion except for the bit of staircase atop a curving ridge in broken lands overgrown with scrub woods.

The Crumbling Stair is a length of weathered, green-veined white marble that rises unheralded out of uneven turf to reach six or so steps into the empty air. Its other end descends into a dark hole.

The Stair is obviously held up and preserved by (failing) magics, but these enchantments lead to nothing aboveground. (Many adventuring bands have tried levitating and flying at various heights above or near the stair, fruitlessly seeking invisible chambers or portals there.) A will-o'-wisp hovers around the stair on most nights, so that it can be easily located from afar.

The lower end of the Stair splits, one end curving grandly to where the main floor of Echofall once was (very close to present-day ground level, though the paving slabs of the hall were carried away long ago for use in less grand homes). The other end descends below ground, leading into a long corridor and a few attached rooms of what were quite extensive cellars before the battle and the ravages of time caused most of the underways to collapse.

A WILL-O'-WISP HOVERS AROUND THE STAIR ON MOST NIGHTS, SO THAT IT CAN BE EASILY LOCATED FROM AFAR.

Adventurers who have penetrated into these depths speak of a giant slug or similar creature that leaves glowing slime-trails on the walls, floor, and ceiling, as well as ghosts or haunts (quite separate from the one that sometimes lurks aboveground) that manifest near the base of the stair and lure certain intruders into deadly traps. Other times these spectres glide along and simply watch visitors or ignore them altogether.

These apparitions include a disembodied human hand cupping a glowing selection of (sometimes whirling) gems; a dark, shadowy, cowled human figure that

guiding. An adventurer should not be surprised to feel observed or listened to when in the presence of such a sculpture—and should speak accordingly (many enjoy conversation, if one knows the right elven tongue).

Those who seek to pluck gems from a frozenfall, or damage its surroundings, should be aware that many frozenfalls can unleash spells as deadly as those of many a living mage.

Even "unadorned" frozenfalls often include gems that store or can be made to emit magics, if one touches them and knows how to call forth their energies.

7. **The word "goblinkin"** refers collectively to goblins, orcs, hobgoblins, and related humanoid creatures—the brutish predators that bedevil civilized Faerûn.
8. **Unknown to Volo,** that is. I can reveal that all of these manifestations have a single source: a now-insane shred of sentience belonging to one of Ybrithe's students, the would-be sorceress Analeithla.

A bad-tempered and graspingly ambitious lass, Analeithla habitually defied Ybrithe's rulings and teachings, boldly and rashly experimenting on her own and plotting to someday seize all of Ybrithe's power for herself. She'd just put some of her own flesh (the smallest joint of her left little finger) into the pommel-stone of a blade and created a magical link between her body and its amputated part (enabling her to see and speak out of the pommel-crystal), when the spell-battle that destroyed her occurred. Somehow her sentience was hurled through or drawn along the collapsing link into the pommel, where she remained, able to see and speak, but do nothing else.

glides along in swift, eerie silence, pointing, beckoning, or gesturing with a drawn sword; and a wild-eyed and finely-gowned elven lady in chains, who screams soundlessly and gestures imploringly to be rescued or released. Their origins and purposes are unknown.[8]

Over the years, various adventurers have reported finding all sorts of strange objects in the cellars (most of which they carried out as booty and examined elsewhere). These include staves, footstools, and cloaks bearing weird magics, that can be assumed[9] to be unfinished student projects stored in the isolated underground chambers where the spellcasters-in-training attempted their most delicate or powerful castings. Judging by past reports, their powers might or might not function properly, or (lacking any instructions) might simply be inexplicable to finders of today. For those who can dare the dangers, of course, magic treasures are always worth recovering—if only to sell to wealthy Waterdhavian collectors or hopeful mages everywhere.

Another phantom has also been reported by several survivors of forays into the ruins. When the door of a certain empty cellar is opened, the apparition of a young women appears floating upright with eyes closed, her bare feet well clear of the floor. She then opens her eyes, screams piercingly, and rushes forward to fade away. Anyone she passes through suffers the effects of a chaotic onslaught of wild magics.[10]

"Bare of all but fell magic and roaming monsters" is how the Bold Axe of Beregost, a recently-whelmed band of a dozen young bravos from up and down the Sword Coast, described the labyrinth at the bottom of the Stair. Others have stressed that although many visitors have scoured the chambers closest to the steps, few or none have reached every distant corner. Treasures might yet lie waiting to be discovered, especially to those who have a means of digging. It should be noted that one recent report warns that a beholder might have begun to do just that. Adventurers are further warned that some of the walls and ceilings of the surviving cellars of Taeros are demonstrably unstable; a skeletal hand protrudes from beneath one collapse in the main passage reached by the Stair, where an entire band of intruders might lie buried.

ADVENTURERS ARE FURTHER WARNED THAT SOME OF THE WALLS AND CEILINGS OF THE CELLARS ARE UNSTABLE.

Finally, the chaos of the spell-battle still lurks fitfully along the ridge. Any spells cast on the Stair, in the cellars, or in the immediate vicinity are apt to go wild, unleashing unintended and uncontrolled effects rather than the desired and expected results.

Trapped in the cellar with the shattered, buried blade, Analeithla went mad. The blade's twisted magics power her ghostly manifestations (the beautiful elf is how she sees herself, though in life she was a human of rather homely and sullen appearance), and she seizes on all intruders as entertainment, luring them and exulting in their misfortunes.

If anyone finds the blade, however, she'll be seized with hope and try to cajole the new wielder into carrying the weapon along, promising to guide the unfortunate to treasure, watch over the individual's slumber, and so on—so long as the person wears the blade and allows Analeithla to see the world.

She'll not tell the truth about herself (and indeed will spin grand tales about godly purposes for the blade and the adventurer who's found it), and her insanity dooms to failure all attempts to magically read, influence, or control her mind—and endangers the sanity of those trying such contacts.

9. **Correctly, as it happens.** Adventurers should be aware that some such projects still survive, though some of them were magically twisted in the wild discharges of the spell-battle. All of them have at least three magical powers or properties (one of which is almost always the ability to either glow akin to a *faerie fire* spell or to levitate upon command). Many have six or more, though these will always be minor magics, useful as weapons or sources of profit only to the resourceful.
10. **This is nothing to do with Analeithla,** who ignores it, and I believe it to be the last remnant of another student, Jalastra Bluenthar, who was in a magical trance when the battle erupted. She no doubt perished just as her phantom records.

Class Acts

The Duelist

by Monte Cook • illustration by Greg Baker

In a world with heavily armored knights on huge, galloping chargers and powerful mages wielding mind-churning spells, there's no place for the daring swashbuckler who relies on his wits and reflexes to survive, right? Wrong. The duelist proves that precision and skill are viable alternatives to massive weapons, and agility is a viable alternative to heavy armor.

The duelist is a nimble, intelligent fighter trained in making precise attacks with light weapons, such as the rapier. Also known as the swashbuckler, the duelist always takes full advantage of his quick reflexes and wits in a fight. Rather than wearing bulky armor, duelists feel the best way to protect themselves is to avoid getting hit in the first place.

Most duelists are fighters, rangers, rogues, or bards. Wizards, sorcerers, and monks make surprisingly good duelists due to their lack of reliance on armor. They also benefit greatly from the weapon skills the duelist offers. Paladins and barbarians who deviate a good deal from their archetypes might be duelists. Elves are more likely to become duelists than dwarves, and halfling and gnome duelists are not uncommon. Half-orc duelists are very rare.

NPC duelists are usually loners looking for adventure or a get-rich-quick scheme. Occasionally they work in very small, tight-knit groups, fighting with team-based tactics.

THE DUELIST — Hit Dice: D10

Lvl.	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+0	+2	+0	Canny Defense
2	+2	+0	+3	+0	Precise Strike +1d6
3	+3	+1	+3	+1	Enhanced Mobility
4	+4	+1	+4	+1	Grace
5	+5	+1	+4	+1	Acrobatic Attack
6	+6	+2	+5	+2	Precise Strike +2d6
7	+7	+2	+5	+2	Elaborate Parry
8	+8	+2	+6	+2	Improved Reflexes
9	+9	+3	+6	+3	Deflect Arrows
10	+10	+3	+7	+3	Precise Strike +3d6

Lvl The level of the duelist.
Attack Bonus The duelist's attack bonus, added to the character's normal attack bonus.
Fort. Save The save bonus on Fortitude saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.
Ref. Save The save bonus on Reflex saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.
Will Save The save bonus on Will saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.
Special Level-dependent class features.

REQUIREMENTS To qualify to become a duelist, a character must fulfil all the following criteria.

Base Attack bonus +6.

Skills Perform 3 ranks, Tumble 5 ranks.

Feats Dodge, Weapon Proficiency (rapier), Ambidexterity, Mobility.

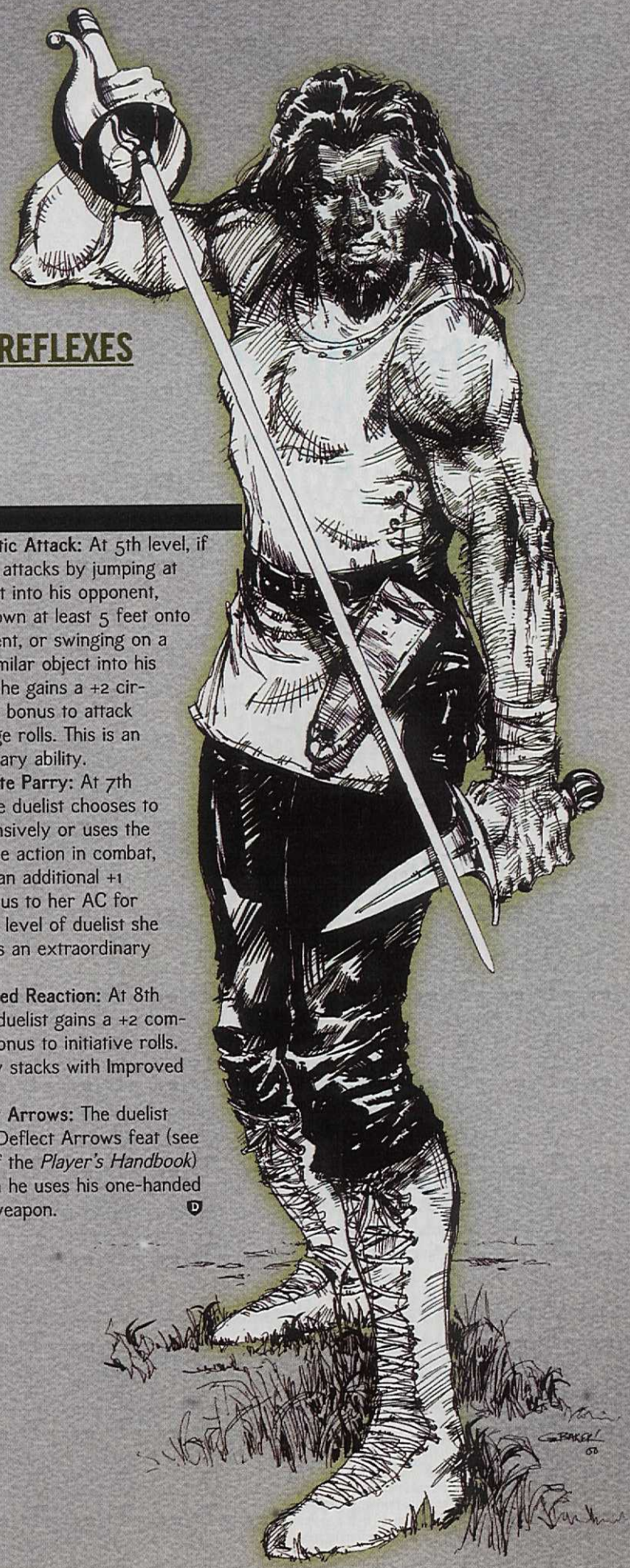
CLASS SKILLS Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

The duelist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Balance (Dex)
Bluff (Cha)
Escape Artist (Dex)
Innuendo (Wis)
Intuit Danger (Wis, exclusive skill)
Jump (Str)
Listen (Wis)
Perform (Cha)
Sense Motive (Wis)
Spot (Wis)
Tumble (Dex)

See the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 4 for skill descriptions.

THE DUELIST ALWAYS TAKES FULL ADVANTAGE OF HIS QUICK REFLEXES AND WITS IN A FIGHT.



CLASS FEATURES

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The duelist is proficient with all simple and martial weapons, but no type of armor or shield.

Canny Defense: When not wearing armor, duelists add their Intelligence bonus to their Dexterity bonus to modify Armor Class while wielding a weapon. As with normal Dexterity AC modifications, positive modifiers are lost when the duelist is caught flat-footed.

Precise Strike: At 2nd level, the duelist gains the extraordinary ability to strike precisely with a light piercing weapon, gaining a bonus +1d6 points of damage added to her normal damage roll. When making a precise strike, the duelist cannot attack with a weapon in her other hand, although she can defend with it (or, if she has the proficiency, a shield). Like critical hits and sneak attacks, Precise Strike is ineffective against constructs, undead, oozes, and fortified armor. Every four duelist levels gained thereafter, she increases the extra damage by +1d6. If the duelist also has the rogue's sneak attack ability, the precise strike damage stacks with the sneak attack damage.

Enhanced Mobility: When not wearing armor, the duelist gains an additional +4 dodge bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity caused when he moves out of or within a threatened area.

Grace: At 4th level, the duelist gains an additional +2 competence bonus to all Reflex saving throws. This ability functions for the duelist only when wearing no armor.

Acrobatic Attack: At 5th level, if the duelist attacks by jumping at least 5 feet into his opponent, jumping down at least 5 feet onto his opponent, or swinging on a rope or similar object into his opponent, he gains a +2 circumstance bonus to attack and damage rolls. This is an extraordinary ability.

Elaborate Parry: At 7th level, if the duelist chooses to fight defensively or uses the full defense action in combat, she gains an additional +1 dodge bonus to her AC for each class level of duelist she has. This is an extraordinary ability.

Improved Reaction: At 8th level, the duelist gains a +2 competence bonus to initiative rolls. This ability stacks with Improved Initiative.

Deflect Arrows: The duelist gains the Deflect Arrows feat (see page 81 of the *Player's Handbook*) only when he uses his one-handed piercing weapon. D

Creature Codex

The Ecology of the DARKMANTLE

by Johnathan M. Richards • illustrations by Dennis Cramer

The eggs started to hatch in complete darkness. This was no surprise, for the subterranean cavern had never before seen the light of day, had never felt the warmth of the sun's rays.[1] In this pitch-black world, a small clutch of leathery gray eggs began warping and buckling as the squirming larvae inside struggled for release.[2] Finally tearing through the membranes of its shadowy prison, the first of the small, sluglike creatures squirmed out into the eternal gloom permeating the Underdark. Its black hide glistening with the slime of its egg, it instinctively crawled away from the other hatchlings, making its way alone into this new world of darkness and gloom. As it inched along, it scraped the ground with its raspy tongue, tentatively probing for the drab mosses and lichens that would support it during its few short months as a grub.[3]

Behind the departing grub, others of its kind began hatching. Each slowly inched its way across the cold, damp stone, making its solitary trek in a random direction through a world that knew no light.

"Barkeep, another round!" called Ardorrak heartily, slamming his now-empty mug down on the table. On either side of him, Thorvin and Haaj swigged down the last of their ale and did likewise, sighing gustily and wiping their beards with the backs of their hands.

Across the table from them, Federico and his cousin, Javorik the Bold, Illusionist Extraordinaire, did their best to keep up. Federico practically inhaled his drink. Rivulets of ale cascaded down either side of his chin as he drank, but he didn't stop until his mug was empty and he could slam it on the table with as much force as his dwarven companions. Blasted if he was going to let a bunch of dwarves one-up him in a drinking contest! Javorik wasn't in quite as much of a desperate hurry; he drank quickly, but not so quickly as to spill any of the ale, wanting to savor its unique taste.

Shandrilla, meanwhile, quietly sipped her mug of dwarven ale and winced at the strong, unfamiliar flavor. She peered distrustingly down at the liquid, as if expecting to find something vile floating in her mug. This was her first time in a dwarven bar, her first sampling of dwarven spirits. Had it been up to her, she would have gone straight back to her room in the inn, maybe indulged in a hot bath. The dwarves, however, had insisted on treating their new-found friends to a few rounds at their favorite watering hole, and she didn't want to offend them by refusing their hospitality.

The barkeep, a retired dwarven adventurer whose face carried a wealth of battle-won scars, strolled over to their table with a tray of heavy mugs balanced on one meaty hand. "Who're yer friends, then, Ardorrak?" he asked, squinting at Shandrilla and her gnomish companions as he plunked the tray down on the table.

"These here're our new best pals: Federico, Javorik, and Shandrilla," replied Ardorrak, grabbing up a new mug and quaffing down a large swallow. "Ran into a bit o' bother with a carrion crawler or two, we did, an' these three gave us a bit o' needed 'sistance. Wouldn't be here to tell the tale if'n it weren't for them!" The dwarf clapped Javorik heartily on the shoulder as he finished, nearly spilling the little gnome onto the floor.

"Shandrilly here rassled one to the ground, she did, all by herself!" offered Haaj, grabbing up a second mug himself. The bartender looked in disbelief at the slim woman, trying to imagine her in hand-to-hand combat with a carrion crawler. He couldn't do it. Shandrilla just

1. **Darkmantles are highly developed gastropods,** believed by some to have evolved from the common piercer (a classic monster from earlier editions of the D&D game—and, incidentally, the first creature ever covered in an "Ecology" article). They are found almost exclusively underground, lairing in subterranean caverns.

2. **Darkmantles are hermaphroditic,** each creature having both male and female reproductive organs. After mating, each darkmantle goes its separate way and lays a clutch of 6-8 eggs in a secluded crevasse, afterward abandoning them forever. A darkmantle egg is about the size of a chicken's, but with a soft, grayish shell that allows it to blend in against stone surfaces.

   About two weeks after they are laid, the eggs hatch into darkmantle grubs. Each grub is about 2 inches long and resembles a common slug. It has eight primitive eyespots along the sides of its head (three on each side; two toward the front) and a moist skin covered with mucus. Darkmantles leave slime trails behind them as they crawl around on the ground.

3. **A darkmantle grub begins life as a herbivore,** devouring mosses, lichen, and fungus with its radula—a tonguelike organ covered in rows and rows of tiny teeth that scrape away minute particles of edible fiber from the surrounding stone. Only after developing into its adult form does a darkmantle become carnivorous.

smiled at him in embarrassment and shrugged. "'S'true!" insisted Haaj.

"This I gotta hear fer meself!" said the barkeep, grabbing up a stool from a nearby table and making himself at home. He scooped up Shandrilla's second mug of ale without thinking and claimed it as his own. As Shandrilla had yet to finish even half of her first mug of the stuff, she said nothing.

The grub had grown during its first few months of life, not just in size but in form as well. Now a full foot in length and as wide around as a human wrist, it crawled along the walls of a gloomy cavern near its birthplace, probing the stone ahead for edible plant fibers with its prototentacles. The grub's tonguelike radula had split in two a week after the creature's birth, then split again, and one final time, leaving a ring of eight writhing appendages wriggling from around the grub's lamprey-like mouth. The tips of each of the prototentacles were still covered in hundreds of tiny teeth, and each housed the creature's sense of taste. As it used its single foot-muscle to crawl along the cold stone, its prototentacles darted about, tasting the stone ahead of it for tiny morsels of vegetable matter.

As had happened several times already during its wanderings, the grub detected one of its own clutchmates clinging to the cavern wall a short distance away.[4] Suddenly, from out of the darkness of the cave scurried a tenebrous worm, its wicked mandibles wide open in hunger. As its clutchmate was silently devoured by the giant caterpillar-beast, the grub instinctively flattened itself into a narrow crack in the wall of the cavern, vanishing from view.[5] Peeking out of the crevice, the grub watched as the tenebrous worm finished its meal and crawled off, finding its way out among the many branching corridors that led to other caverns and other prey. The grub remained safely inside its hidden niche until hunger once again forced it out in search of food.

"So when I find I kin finally move again, there's Shandrilla wearin' two of our packs, and she's got the critter's head pinned to the ground," said Ardorrak. "An' this one"—pointing a thumb at Javorik—"he's carving its guts out with his dagger. I tell you, it was a sight to see!" There was a roar of laughter as the assembled dwarves pictured the image in their minds.

Shandrilla noticed that several other dwarves had gathered around their table during Ardorrak's tale. She looked around at a sea of bearded dwarven faces, all gazing at her with looks of admiration and respect. Nervous at all the attention, she focused her gaze on her mug of dwarven ale and drained it dry.

"Ah, now that was nothing," said Javorik, looking over at his flustered human companion with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. "You should have seen how she took care of these two puddings we ran into one time." Seeing that all eyes were upon him, Javorik began the tale.

"We were down in this tunnel network, the first time either of us had been in the Underdark, looking for some squimmerall. Anybody ever have squimmerall tea? No? Good stuff. Anyway, so Shanny and I are walking down this tunnel, when we see what at first we think is a pool of oil, oozing right at us..."

Embarrassed, Shandrilla reached for another mug of ale.

The creature, now in its full adult form, was ready for the next big step in its life. It hung suspended from the cavern roof by its muscular foot, hidden among the many stalactites reaching down toward the floor below. Despite its precarious hold it had an excellent sense of balance, thanks to an organ barely hidden underneath the front of its shell.[6]

In the half-light streaming in from the cavern entrance, it would be nearly impossible to distinguish the darkmantle from the stalactites: The creature kept its eight tentacles pressed together in a ring so that they tapered to a point below it. Its eyespots were now spaced evenly about its body, but they provided little more than a vague awareness of the sunlight streaming into the far side of the cavern. As always, the creature's sonic blindsight provided it with an excellent "view" of the surrounding

4. **Darkmantles, both in grub and adult stages,** have blindvision, a form of echolocation that uses high-frequency sound-pulses that are completely inaudible to most other creatures. These pulses provide a sonarlike "sight" to a maximum range of 90 feet. A magical *silence* effect negates the darkmantle's blindvision and effectively blinds the creature. With its blindvision, a darkmantle is able to detect the presence of invisible objects or beings.

The darkmantle's eight eyespots are vestigial, provide the creature with only the slightest differentiation between light and dark—just enough to realize when it has wandered out into the sunlight. (Since their blindsight sonar allows them to "see" only out to a 90-foot range, darkmantles tend to be agoraphobic; they prefer the cramped quarters of the Underdark to the open spaces of the surface world.) The eyespots do not provide the darkmantle with any sort of true vision.

Darkmantle eyespots can replace bat's fur as a substitute material component for the arcane version of the *darkness* spell.

5. **Darkmantles are born boneless** and remain so throughout their lives. As grubs, they can flatten themselves to a half-inch's thickness, squeezing through cracks to avoid predators. In maturity, however, the gastropod shell begins to develop, preventing adult darkmantles from performing such acts of extreme bodily compression.

territory. The shell that had grown from the creature's back[7] was itself the color and texture of limestone, serving as excellent camouflage on the cavern ceiling. Even without the ever-present shadows that served to cloak the creature from view, the darkmantle's skin color shifted to blend in with nearly any stone surface; to any casual observer, there was no difference between the darkmantle and the stalactites among which it hung.

Then it dropped from the ceiling.

Instinctively, the darkmantle spread wide its tentacles. Doing so spread the tough membranes that had formed between them.[8] The membranes filled with air and slowed the creature's descent; then, by flapping the "wings" thus formed, the darkmantle flew erratically through the cavern for a short distance.[9] Its aerial path took it briefly outside the cave entrance and into the bright sunlight.[10] Dropping to the ground in surprise, it scuttled quickly on its tentacle-tips[11] back into the comforting shadows of the cave, back to the world it knew.

Shandrilla realized with a bit of surprise that she was quite drunk.

She looked suspiciously at her empty mug—her third? fourth? it was hard to remember—with eyes narrowed, as if the ale had conspired against her. What time was it? She looked around at the patrons of the bar; it must be getting late, for the crowd around her table had dispersed, leaving her two gnomish companions and their three new dwarven buddies to drink and talk quietly amongst themselves. Shaking her head to clear it, Shandrilla realized there was a drone of voices coming from her table. Looking bleary-eyed at Javorik, she saw that he was speaking. She focused her attention on him and caught him in mid-sentence.

"...never told us what you guys had been doing down there," he said.

"'Splorin', mos'ly," replied Thorvin, tripping heavily over his tongue. "Foun' us a way into this secret temple or sumpin' down there. Real old stuff, nobody'd been around there fer cent'ries."

"Secret temple," echoed Haaj, tapping a finger to the side of his nose and winking suggestively.

"So's we figgered nobody'd mind if we helped ourselves," put in Ardorrak. "Cleaned up pretty good, too, we did! Didn't leave too much behind us, no sir-ree!" Of the three dwarves, he seemed the least affected by the mass quantities of hard ale they'd all been pouring down their gullets for the past several hours.

"'Cept them eyes," remarked Thorvin, belching loudly.

"Eyes," echoed Haaj, tapping under one of his own bloodshot orbs and nodding knowingly.

"Yeah, 'cept for them eyes," agreed Ardorrak. "There was this big old statue carved right outta the stone—some kinda snake-god thingy with glowing red eyes this big around!" He held his hands out, cupping an imaginary circle some four inches in diameter.

"Rubies, I betcha," suggested Thorvin, scratching absently at his beard.

"Rubies, I betcha too," added Haaj.

"Why'd you leave them?" asked Javorik.

"Couldn't get up there!" replied Ardorrak. "They musta been, oh, I dunno—mebbe thirty, forty feet up. We tried climbing the stupid statue, but none o' us is much fer climbing."

Javorik scootched himself forward across the table until he was face-to-face with Ardorrak. "Shanny could do it," he said quietly.

"Huh?" said Shandrilla, perking to attention at the sound of her name.

"You could climb a forty-foot statue, couldn't you, Shanny?" he asked. "A big, strong human like you?"

"Sure," agreed Shandrilla woozily. "No plarbrem—prollbim—kee hee hee hee!" She giggled at her tongue's sudden rebellion.

"All right then!" said Ardorrak, eyes shining wildly with the thought of retrieving the one piece of obvious treasure the dwarven trio had left behind.

"No. Prob. Lem," enunciated Shandrilla carefully. When finished, she smiled in triumph at her success and immediately passed out onto the table, much to the amusement of the dwarves.

The darkmantle crawled slowly across the cavern ceiling on its gastropod foot.[12] Its tentacles dangled below it, tasting the moisture of a rainy night[13] as it made its deliberate path away from the cave opening leading to the outside world.

As it crawled along the ceiling, the darkmantle suddenly sensed a flurry of motion below it. It was a flock of bats, preparing for a night seeking prey on

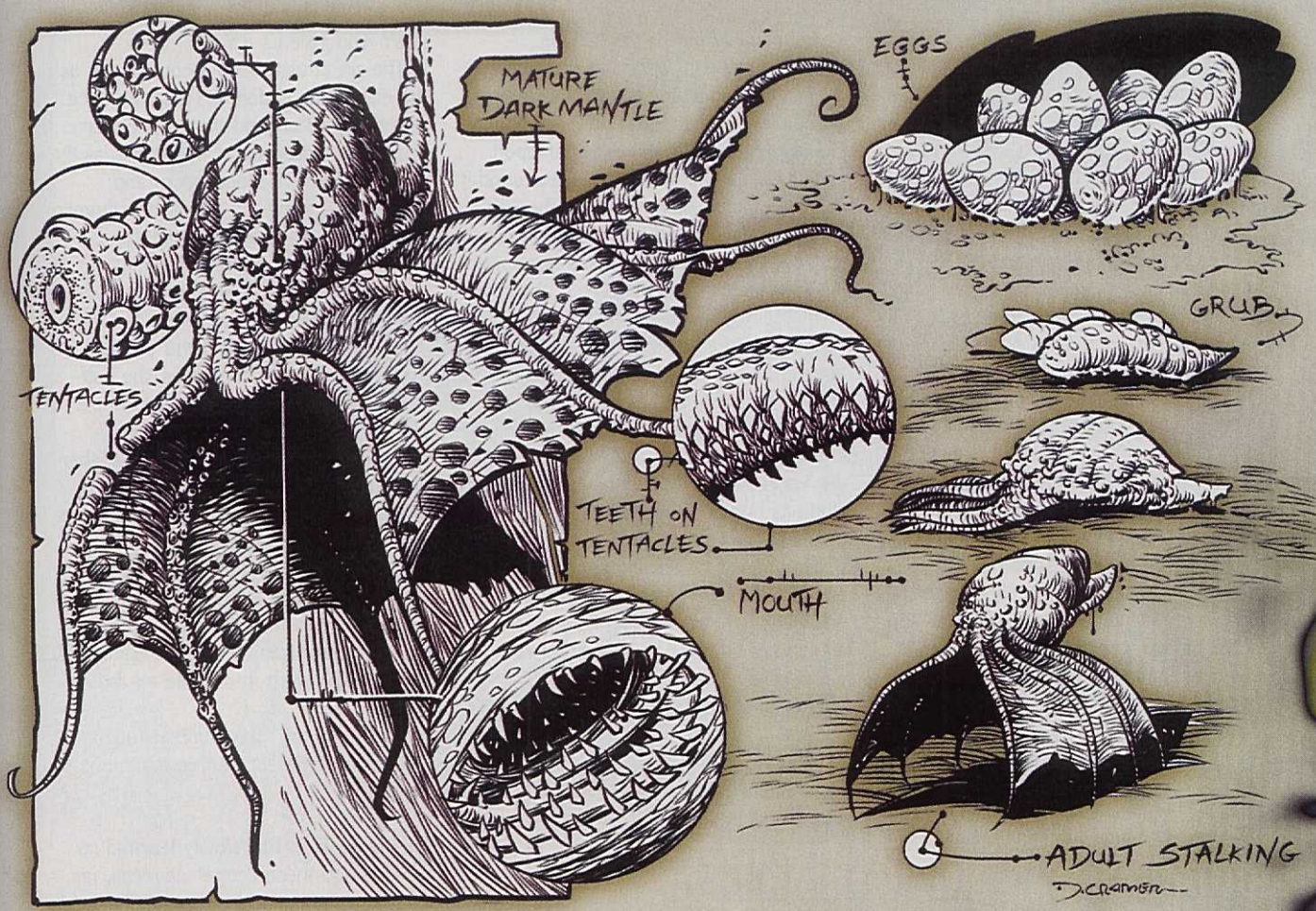
DROPPING TO THE GROUND IN SURPRISE, IT SCUTTLED QUICKLY ON ITS TENTACLE-TIPS BACK INTO THE COMFORTING SHADOWS OF THE CAVE, BACK TO THE WORLD IT KNEW.

6. **The statocyst is a small, baglike organ** common in many gastropods. It contains numerous small, sandlike grain particles suspended in liquid, and it aids the darkmantle's sense of balance. In that respect, the statocyst is equivalent to a human's inner ear.

7. **The darkmantle's shell begins growing** at about the same time as the creature's prototentacles grow long enough to account for half of the creature's total body length. The shell results from mineral intake as the darkmantle's radula scrapes rock surfaces in search of food. Mineral secretions from the pores of the darkmantle's dorsal area gradually build up to form a hardened shell, which continues to grow and thicken as the darkmantle ages and the mineral buildup continues.

8. **In its full adult form,** the darkmantle's appearance becomes similar to that of an octopus: the narrow body, the long tentacles surrounding the mouth, and the flaps of skin between the tentacles all give the creature a cephalopodic look. However, an adult darkmantle retains its lampreylike mouth.

   In addition, the flaps of skin connecting the tentacles reach two-thirds of the length of the tentacles. The darkmantle spreads its tentacles and can use the skin-flaps as primitive wings.



IN FUNCTION, THE DARKMANTLE COMBINES FEATURES OF MANY ANIMAL SPECIES—OCTOPI, SNAILS, AND EVEN FLYING SQUIRRELS.

the surface world. Without hesitation, the darkmantle released the grip of its suction-foot and swooped down upon an unsuspecting bat.

As the two creatures collided in midair, the darkmantle wrapped its tentacles around the hapless bat and squeezed tightly. Immediately, both creatures began plummeting toward the ground.[4] The darkmantle didn't seem to notice, however, refusing to loosen its grip upon its prey even as both creatures struck the hard cavern floor. Absorbing the impact with its rubbery tentacles, the darkmantle concentrated completely on its goal: crushing the life out of the bat it had captured. Only after the bat was dead did the darkmantle release its vicelike grip and transfer the carcass to its circular mouth, filled with many sharp, tiny teeth.

"I agreed to this?" asked Shandrilla for what must have been the tenth time, as she traipsed through the underground cavern network once again.

"You were very insistent," agreed Javorik, holding out a torch and hurrying to keep up with the others. Up ahead, the three dwarven fighters marched at full speed through the roughly-hewn tunnel, eager to get to the secret temple they'd discovered and let their new human companion get about the business at hand—namely, prying the giant rubies from the statue of the weird snake-god they'd uncovered. Federico marched right along with them, determined not to let a bunch of dwarves show him up. If any of the four were feeling any after-effects from their night of heavy drinking, they didn't show it. Javorik

A darkmantle is about 2 feet long when it first reaches adulthood, and it continues to grow until attaining a length of 4 feet. Darkmantles live to about six years, provided another predator doesn't eat them first.

9. **Darkmantles are poor fliers,** flitting through the air at a speed of 30 feet. Because of their boneless bodies and relatively light shells, darkmantles can glide for short distances without moving their "wings," but must otherwise "flap" like a bird to propel themselves. Darkmantles can fly only short distances at a time, usually only up to the ceiling from a cavern floor or from perch to perch. Darkmantles expose their round mouths while flying, occasionally catching quick meals of small flying insects while in flight near the surface world.

10. **Darkmantles spend almost all of their lives** in subterranean caverns or caves and can be found throughout the Underdark. Those that lair in caves near the surface might occasionally crawl outside at night or on overcast days, but they rarely stray too far from their cave entrances. Sunlight does not actually harm darkmantles; they're just unaccustomed to it and prefer staying in dark areas. A *daylight* or similar spell can sometimes be used to drive off a darkmantle or at least keep it at bay for a time. However, darkmantles suffer no combat penalties in areas of bright light.

didn't seem particularly affected, either, come to think about it. Only Shandrilla seemed to carry a reminder of the previous night with her: a throbbing headache that wouldn't go away and a mouth that felt like it was filled with old socks. She'd had some tea in the morning, and that had seemed to help for awhile, but not by much, and not for long.

"I don't believe it," muttered Shandrilla to herself, for what must have also been the tenth time. "No more dwarven ale for me, Javorik, ever again!"

"Whatever you say, Shanny."

Since moving deeper into the subterranean passageways, the darkmantle had discovered that it was prey as often as it was predator. In a burst of frantic energy, it flapped its tentacle-wings, lifting it into the stale air and up to the top of the cavern ceiling, where it hoped it would be safe from the large, multi-legged predator that had stumbled across it.[15] No such luck: The carrion crawler merely altered its course, walking up the wall of the Underdark cavern on its way to the ceiling, its tentacles writhing hungrily before it.

As the worm-monster closed the gap, the darkmantle dropped from the ceiling, gliding a short distance before landing back on the floor. The carrion crawler was again forced to change course, diverting to the wall to once more reach the floor. The darkmantle took the opportunity to crawl down a narrow corridor and out of sight. It couldn't keep running for long; its only hope lay in camouflage.

Temporarily out of the carrion crawler's view, it flapped to the ceiling again, snagged a stalactite with a tentacle, and found a quick perch on the ceiling. Getting a good grip with its gastropod foot, it spread its tentacles wide around it in all directions, covering its body with its skin-flaps. Tucked inside itself in this fashion, the darkmantle looked like nothing so much as a slight bulge in the rock of the ceiling.[16] Using only quick pulses of sonar to gain an idea of any movement around it, it watched as the carrion crawler entered the cavern, wandered around aimlessly for a short time, and exited by another passageway. The danger was over for now; it had managed to elude its hunter. Nonetheless, it rested motionlessly on the cavern ceiling for several hours, replenishing its energy and making sure that all potential danger was gone before uncoiling its tentacles and exploring the new tunnel network in which it now found itself.

"There it be," said Ardorrak proudly.

"IT'S BEAUTIFUL," SHE WHISPERED. "DO YOU REALLY THINK IT'S RIGHT TO PRY OUT ITS EYES? IT SEEMS—WELL, SACRILEGIOUS."

Shandrilla looked up at the stone carving in appreciation of its fine craftsmanship, but she also noticed that the scale patterns on the serpent god would make suitable hand- and footholds during the climbing process. The red eyes of the stone beast glowed softly as if with an inner light.

"It's beautiful," she whispered. "Do you really think it's right to pry out its eyes? It seems—well, sacrilegious."

"Don't worry about it," responded Ardorrak. Then, in a louder voice he called out: "Hey! Snake-god! We're gonna pull them eyeballs outta yer face, less'n you give us a sign!"

The six adventurers stood silently as the echoes of Ardorrak's last sentence reverberated around the huge cavern. Shandrilla looked up at the statue, as if awaiting a cue. It stood, silent and unmoving, gazing out across the cavern.

"I reckon it's okay with him, then," replied Ardorrak matter-of-factly.

"Whaddaya think, Shanny? Can you climb it?" asked Javorik.

"No problem," replied the young woman, smiling to herself as she half-remembered tripping over the simple phrase the night before. She took a deep breath to clear her head and then got down to business. Removing her pack, she started unloading its contents and distributing what she'd need into various pockets and loops on her belt. She checked that her dagger and short sword were in their sheaths; a small hammer went into her belt; a number of short spikes went into a pile on the floor.

"Light 'em up," she commanded Javorik, and the diminutive gnome bent to comply.

The darkmantle had slowly learned its way around these deeper caverns, far away from the world of sun and rain.[17] In many ways these caves were different from those near the surface, but in all of the important ways they were the same. The stone passageways housed abundant life: bats, spiders, insects, lizards. There were stalactites among which to hide, pools of cold, clear water from which to drink, endless passageways and corridors in which to explore. Life was good, food was plentiful: the darkmantle was content.

Then it met up with an entirely new type of food.

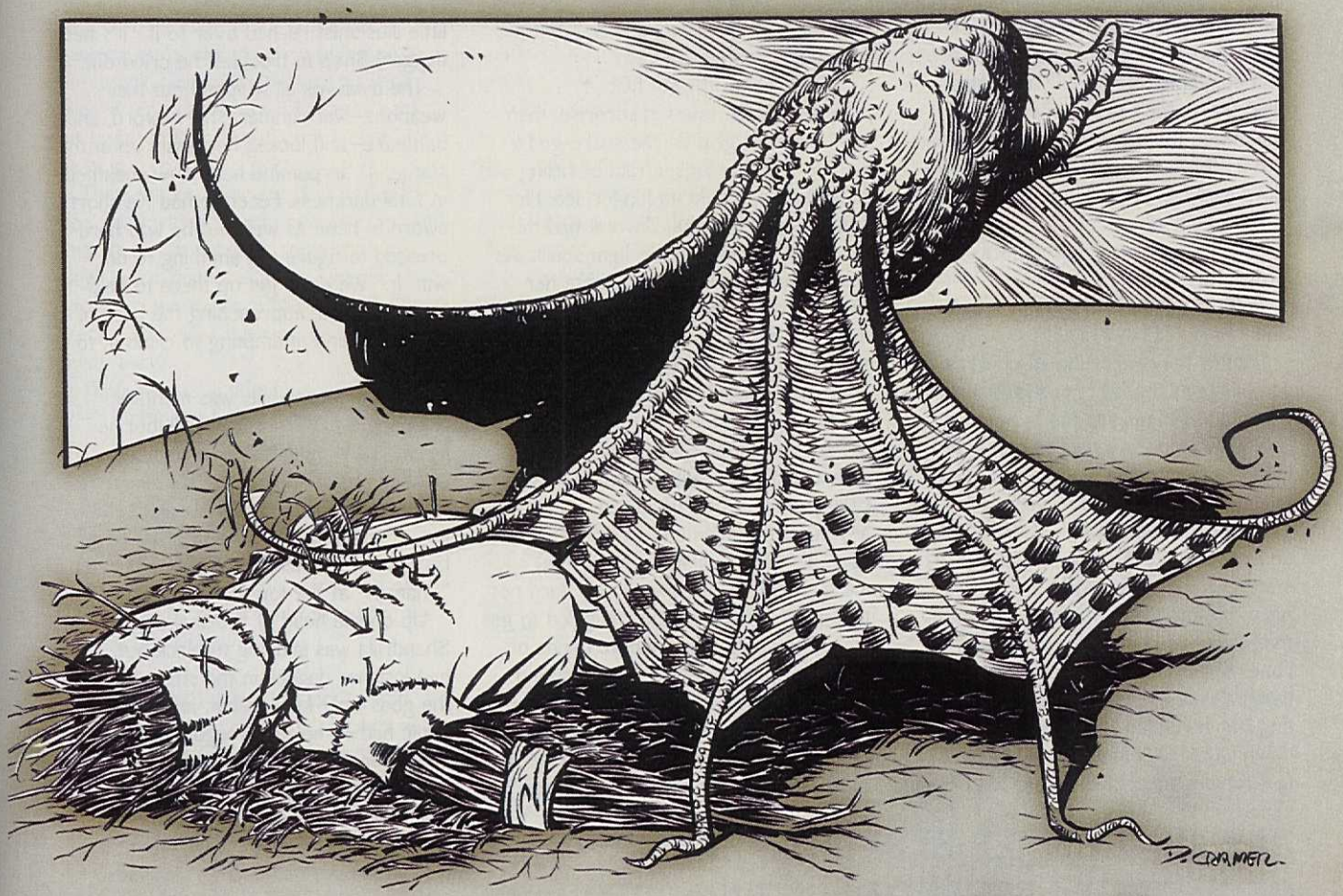
Shandrilla paused in her ascent up the stone statue. Pulling one of the small spikes from between her lips with her left hand, she positioned it between her

11. **Although the adult darkmantle** retains its gastropod foot situated directly above its dorsal shell, it can reach a speed of 20 feet by employing its tentacles as "legs." This is the darkmantle's fastest method of transportation over longer distances; while its flight speed is faster, it is an awkward flier and can stay airborne for only short distances at a time.

12. **The darkmantle uses its gastropod foot** to climb along walls or ceilings at a speed of 5 feet. It cannot use its tentacles for this purpose, as they are not "sticky."

13. **Even in its adult form,** the darkmantle's tentacles remain its organs of taste. The last third of each tentacle (the part extending beyond the creature's skin-flaps) remains covered with thousands of tiny teeth, just as they did as a radula and prototentacles. This makes a strike from a darkmantle's tentacles more painful than it would be otherwise; darkmantles inflict 1d4+4 points of damage with each buffet from their tentacles, and such strikes are made with a +4 melee attack bonus.

14. **Unfortunately for the darkmantle,** it can use its tentacles as wings or as attack appendages, but not both at the same time. For this reason, darkmantles prefer attacking victims on the ground, swooping down from above and engulfing them in their tentacles. Being clumsy fliers, darkmantles rarely target aerial prey, although they might drop down on low-flying creatures that pass by below them. In either case, the darkmantle has a +4 initiative modifier due to the Improved Initiative feat.



IN THIS CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT, THIS CAPTURED DARKMANTLE DEMONSTRATES ITS LASHING TECHNIQUE.

thumb and forefinger while gripping a jutting stone scale with the rest of her hand. Reaching down for her hammer with her right hand, she tapped the spike into place. The light spell that Javorik had cast upon the spike heads illuminated the side of the statue for twenty feet in all directions. There was another such spike down at the bottom of the statue, where she'd hammered it firmly into place before beginning her dangerous ascent.

She looked up: less than halfway left to go. Returning the hammer to its loop on her belt, she found a good handhold and continued her climb, the last two remaining glowing spikes protruding from her mouth.

The darkmantle crawled slowly along the ceiling, curiously investigating the steady stream of air blowing its way.

Sure enough, along the edge of the cavern wall was a one-foot-tall gap, twice again as long as it was tall, from which emanated a steady current of air. The darkmantle squeezed its body into the gap, crawling along upside-down on its gastropod foot and probing ahead with its tentacles.

There were voices coming from the narrow gap.[18] The darkmantle did not recognize them as voices, merely as sounds made by some other creature; the concept of a language was beyond its animal intelligence. It scurried forward, through the gap and into a large chamber. Oddly, there was some sort of light source at work in the chamber; even the darkmantle's weak eyespots could detect the illumination.

Puzzled, the darkmantle crept forward.

15. **Short bursts of flight not only allow** the darkmantle to move faster than it can travel on its tentacle-tips but also breaks up its scent-trail. Many Underdark predators hunt by scent; these creatures often give up when the scent-trail suddenly ends.

16. **This is the second form of camouflage** employed by the darkmantle (the first, of course, being its stalactite "disguise"). Darkmantles usually cover themselves up with their skin-flaps when actively hiding from predators; naturally, the stalactite disguise works only when the creature is among other stalactites, whereas looking like a lump of rock works just about anywhere.

When sleeping, or during the many months of hibernation, a darkmantle prefers hanging from the ceiling disguised as a stalactite, as it requires less effort for the darkmantle to hang from its foot than to find comfortable holds for each of its eight tentacles. Darkmantles also passively "hunt" in this fashion, hanging motionlessly from the cavern ceiling and then dropping down upon unsuspecting prey that passes beneath.

When actively "disguised," either as a stalactite or a lump of rock, darkmantles have a +11 bonus to Hide skill checks.

Shandrilla pulled herself up onto the snake-god's head, using its carved teeth as a convenient foothold. Then, straddling the statue's broad snout, she hammered the last remaining light spike into its forehead, right between its red-glowing eyes. "I'm up!" she called down to her companions.

"Are they rubies?" called back Ardorrak.

"Yes, looks like it! Big ones!" replied Shandrilla.

"I knew they was rubies!" chuckled Thorvin, rubbing his hands together in greed and grinning at the thought of how much money a pair of four-inch rubies would fetch.

Up on the snake-god's head, Shandrilla pulled out a large iron spike and proceeded to anchor it into the statue's muzzle. This spike had a hole near the top, through which the young thief secured her thin coil of silken rope. After all, climbing up was one thing; she could see where she was putting her hands on the way up. Climbing down would be harder; she'd have to feel for each foothold in turn, and there was no guarantee that she'd be back down on the ground when Javorik's light spells ran their course. Shandrilla didn't plan on being plunged into sudden darkness halfway down a forty-foot statue.

Satisfied that her line was secure, she scooted her way back up to the first of the snake-god's eyes. Pulling out her trusty dagger, she ran its blade along the bottom surface of the gem, trying to pry it from the stone. With a few grunts of exertion and some frantic wiggling back and forth of her slim blade, she felt the gem begin to give way.

Then the world went black.[19]

Shandrilla shrieked in surprise, then tightened her grip on the snake-god's muzzle with her legs, afraid of falling off now that she could no longer see. Her first thought was that Javorik had mistimed the duration of his light spells. As she opened her mouth to berate her gnomish companion about his spellcasting skills, she felt something solid strike the back of her head and wrap several ropy appendages around her face, preventing her from making a sound.[20]

Panic overtook Shandrilla. In the back of her mind she realized that she was balanced forty feet up in the air and that any sudden movements could potentially push her off the statue's head to a messy death below. Still, it was hard not to squirm around as she struggled to get free. She could feel separate bands of rubbery appendages wrapped around her head and throat, squeezing tightly; instinctively, she stabbed backward with her dagger in an attempt to dislodge the creature from the back of her head.

SHE COULD FEEL SEPARATE BANDS OF RUBBERY APPENDAGES WRAPPED AROUND HER HEAD AND THROAT, SQUEEZING TIGHTLY.

Down below, the sudden lack of illumination up at the top of the statue hadn't gone unnoticed by the dwarves and gnomes. "What's that silly human girl up to now?" muttered Federico under his breath.

"Shanny? You okay up there?" called out Javorik, worry in his voice.

No answer.

"Shanny?" he called out again.

As if in response, an object came hurtling down from above, clattering to the stone floor with a metallic clang. The little illusionist rushed over to it. "It's her dagger! She's in trouble!" he cried out.

The dwarves all whipped out their weapons—warhammer, short sword, and battleaxe—and looked helplessly up at the statue, its serpentine head now sheathed in total darkness. Federico had his short sword in hand as well, but he was hard-pressed to figure out anything to do with it. "We gotta get up there to help her!" he cried, approaching the base of the statue and attempting to climb it, to no avail.

Javorik, meanwhile, was mentally readying a magic missile spell, but he knew that without being able to see a suitable target, the spell was useless. He had no magical means of flying, levitating, or even spider climbing. Gnashing his teeth in helpless frustration, he cried, "Shanny!" at the top of his lungs.

Up on the head of the snake god, Shandrilla was starting to black out. She had lost her dagger in the struggle with the gods-only-knew-what, and in her panic had completely forgotten about the short sword strapped at her left hip. Blindly grasping around for a weapon—any weapon—her fingers brushed the multifaceted orb of the snake-god's left eye, which she had been prying loose with her dagger before the attack. Grasping it with all her might, she tugged and felt its solid weight fall into her hand. Without further thought, she swung it at the creature adhering to her face. There was a solid thunk as it hit something hard; pleased at the result, Shandrilla repeated the action and noticed the grip of the tentacles loosening up somewhat.

Then the ruby slipped from her fingers, to bounce off the side of the snake-god's head and plummet toward her companions, forty feet below.

The darkmantle was surprised at the initial ferocity of this new type of food. After stealthily creeping up to its intended meal along the cavern ceiling, it

17. **Given its flight abilities,** a darkmantle can travel over quite a wide area. For this reason, darkmantle infestations might seem to spring up overnight, as the creatures cover many miles of territory in their search for food.

The darkmantle, with its tendency toward a high activity rate, can last about a week between meals.

18. **Unlike most gastropods,** darkmantles have an excellent sense of hearing. Their "ears" take the form of numerous tiny grooves or pits spaced evenly through the exterior surfaces of their tentacles. As a result, darkmantles have a +4 racial bonus to Listen skill checks, as well as 1 rank in the Listen skill, for a total bonus of +5.

19. **Darkmantles can cast the equivalent** of a *darkness* spell once per day, cast as if by a 5th-level sorcerer, giving the sphere of darkness a 20-foot radius and a duration of 50 minutes.

Darkmantles habitually employ their *darkness* ability immediately before attacking. Like the spell of the same name, the darkmantle's *darkness* must be cast upon an object touched by the creature. Depending upon circumstances, the darkmantle either casts its *darkness* on a low-hanging stalactite (in low caverns where the

triggered its magical darkness on a hanging stalactite and then pounced to the attack. Gliding to its prey on widespread tentacle-wings, it landed smack on target and enveloped the victim's head in its crushing grip.

Then, without warning, the darkmantle's flesh was suddenly being ripped and torn. It was apparently some type of claw, but it tasted of metal when it bit deep into the darkmantle's tentacle. A quick buffet sent the strange claw flying away.

Then, just as suddenly, solid blows were striking the darkmantle's shell, hard enough for it to begin cracking. The darkmantle winced in silent pain,[21] but kept gripping its prey. Surely, the creature would tire before long!

Then, apparently, it did just that; slumping to the left, the victim slid off the side of its perch and fell toward the ground below.

Shandrilla felt the world start to spin and realized she was mere seconds away from blacking out. Her left hand brushed against her coil of silken rope; acting on little more than instinct, she grabbed it from somewhere in the middle, wound it around her wrist a few times, and leapt from the snake-god's head.

Her consciousness left her at some point on the way down.

Javorik saw her emerge from the inky blackness like a falling rock, some sort of bag over her head. It wasn't until she suddenly stopped her descent and crashed sideways into the statue that he realized she was hanging suspended from her thin line. She dangled by her left wrist, her toes some ten feet above the ground.

The bag was moving, tightening its grip around Shandrilla's head.

"Hands!" yelled Javorik at the dwarves, interlocking his fingers to demonstrate what he wanted, then spouting off the words to his magic missile spell. Ardorrak and Thorvin dropped their weapons and locked hands, while shafts of magical energy struck the grayish "bag" on Shandrilla's head.

"Up!" yelled Javorik, as he raced toward the two dwarves and placed his right foot in their interlocked hands. They straightened their postures and threw their hands up over their heads, flinging the gnomish illusionist high into the air.

Javorik landed on the back of Shandrilla's legs and climbed his way up to her shoulders. On the way up he slipped her short sword from its scabbard and stabbed the creature that was even now tightening its grip around her neck.

The results were as Javorik had hoped. The monster released its grip on the human to better deal with this new threat; Javorik pierced it under its hardened shell with the sword and flipped it, sword and all, off of his friend and into the air.

The darkmantle found itself unable to fly with a metal sword poking out from the side of its body; it plummeted to the ground and struck hard. Reacting quickly, it rolled up onto its tentacle-tips, ready to scurry away—only to be cut in half by a single stroke of Haaj's battleaxe.

Shandrilla awoke on the ground, surrounded by five worried faces. There was a throbbing pain in her left shoulder, and the skin on her left wrist felt raw.

"Shanny? You okay?" asked Javorik, worry in his voice.

"Okay," croaked Shandrilla. "What—happened? What was—that—thing?"

"Beats me," admitted the little illusionist. Some kind of weird tentacle monster. It's dead, though. You sure you're okay?"

"Fine," rasped Shandrilla in response, swallowing hard. Her throat felt raw; it was difficult to get the words out.

"You think you can move, then? We're ready to go, if you are."

"Ruby?" croaked Shandrilla, casting her gaze up at the snake-god statue. Its head was still sheathed in darkness.

Ardorrak approached with a handful of tinted shards. The slivers glinted red and glowed slightly. "Colored glass," he said disgustedly. "The thing shattered when ye dropped it. Complete waste of yer time."

"Then—let's—go," gasped Shandrilla, pulling herself up to her feet. She cradled her left arm against her stomach, thinking she had probably dislocated her shoulder from the sudden lurch at the end of her descent.

Ardorrak picked up his torch and silently led the others back the way they had come. Javorik and Federico flanked Shandrilla protectively on either side, ready to catch her if she stumbled.

As they exited the forgotten temple, Shandrilla took one last look back at the giant statue. As if on cue, the darkness spell expired, and the snake-god seemed to wink at Shandrilla with its one good eye, glowing a faint red in the shadows.

Shandrilla shivered and turned away. D

THE DARKMANTLE WINCED IN SILENT PAIN, BUT KEPT GRIPPING ITS PREY. SURELY, THE CREATURE WOULD TIRE BEFORE LONG!

20-foot radius of effect is certain to encompass the darkmantle's intended prey) or upon a small pebble that the creature usually carries with it under its shell for that very purpose. The pebble is imbued with *darkness* and dropped down near the intended victim; the darkmantle follows immediately afterward and attacks.

A darkmantle's echolocation works perfectly within the area of effect of the *darkness* spell, allowing the creature to "see" well enough to attack without the standard chance of missing.

20. **When a darkmantle attacks with its tentacles,** it makes a grapple attack with a +4 bonus without provoking an attack of opportunity. Once attached, the darkmantle constricts for an automatic 1d4+4 points of damage each round until the victim is slain or escapes. Grappling is described fully on page 137 of the *Player's Handbook*.

If the darkmantle's initial attack misses, it usually flies up to drop onto its prey again.

21. **Other than the subsonic pulses of sonar,** darkmantles make no vocalizations.

Vs. Goblins

by Bruce R. Cordell

How ter fight goblins? Hah, hah! You take yer blade to the little blighters, that's wot! Wot else? —Hronk the Half-orc

Where there's one goblin, there are probably ten more around the corner.

Goblins, kobolds, and other low Hit Dice creatures are individually weak, but they make up for that with traps and tactics that rely on indirect attacks or overwhelming foes with superior numbers. A low-level party of adventurers can find themselves drawn out, disorganized, and possibly depleted of their full power through constant small-scale skirmishes.

PREPARATION

If you know your character is fated to fight goblins, decisions you make while creating your character (and advancing in level) are important.

CLEAVE & GREAT CLEAVE: The Cleave feat (*prerequisite:* Power Attack) seems specifically designed to allow you to plow through weak humanoids. Whenever you down one, you have the chance to down another one immediately. Goblins hate that.

WHIRLWIND ATTACK: Like cleave, Whirlwind Attack is ideal against a host of foes. Unfortunately, it has many prerequisites, and you won't be able to get Whirlwind Attack right off. But, once taken, it's perfect for downing low-level humanoids. If facing two or more adjacent foes with poor AC and who are generally weak, a Whirlwind Attack is always a good idea. Since you can attack all adjacent foes within 5 feet, being surrounded by goblins before you let this rip is sure to bring goblins woe—unless the goblins flanking you hide a rogue or two in their midst, in which case you had better extricate yourself from your flanked position immediately.

MAXIMIZE SPELL: Your spellcaster will find this feat nice for many reasons, but it's particularly useful against goblins when coupled with, say, the *sleep* spell. Maximize Spell maximizes all numerical values of a spell. The *sleep* spell can affect up to 2d4 HD of creatures, which, in conjunction with Maximize Spell, is a cool 8 HD. Goblins, kobolds, and creatures of similar ilk are known for their low HD. Thus, a Maximized *sleep* can potentially affect an entire gang of goblins who fail their saving throws.

TACTICS

Setting up your character is only half the battle. The tactics you use to take on your goblin or kobold foes can decide whether you die or live to fight another day.

Don't get drawn out: A typical goblin warren is arranged so that you'll likely have several smaller encounters on the outskirts, while the goblins' real strength waits at the warren's heart. If your party has exhausted half or more of its replenishables (spells, potions, hit points, ammo, and so on) through several small skirmishes, take stock of the situation. If you know you are close to the center of the warren, back off to defensible position and rest. The heart of the warren is always the toughest and most dearly defended. In the meantime, some of the areas you cleared out might refill with goblins, but in so doing, the goblins are merely rearranging their forces, bleeding off strength in other areas. Eventually, they'll exhaust their reinforcements.

Root out the fortifications: Low HD creatures know they are fragile, and if they have time to prepare, they will set themselves up behind barriers or walls, or on top of ledges, in order to rain ranged attacks on advancing enemies. You could bull right up and over the wall or barrier, taking fire all the while, and finally engage your foes directly, but at the price of a lot of extra damage. Sometimes, this is the only choice. Alternatively, you can loft alchemist fire over the wall or onto the ledge holding your goblin foes. The round after breakage is the round when struck or splashed foes catch fire, unless they somehow scrape off the fluid. This is your chance to charge the wall and draw less fire.

Don't let them flank you: Goblins, with their superior numbers, often attempt to flank lone foes. You can minimize this risk by always standing adjacent to one or more of your allies, or if alone, along a wall. Don't pass up your opportunities to move into flanking positions on overexcited goblins, especially if you are a rogue, or just as importantly, if you can set a rogue up for a good flanking position. Sneak attacks go through goblins like a heated dagger through clotted cream.

VS. Goblins Tips

- Favor multiple attacks
- Stock plenty of ammunition
- Conserve your power
- Watch your back
- Prepare to overcome cover

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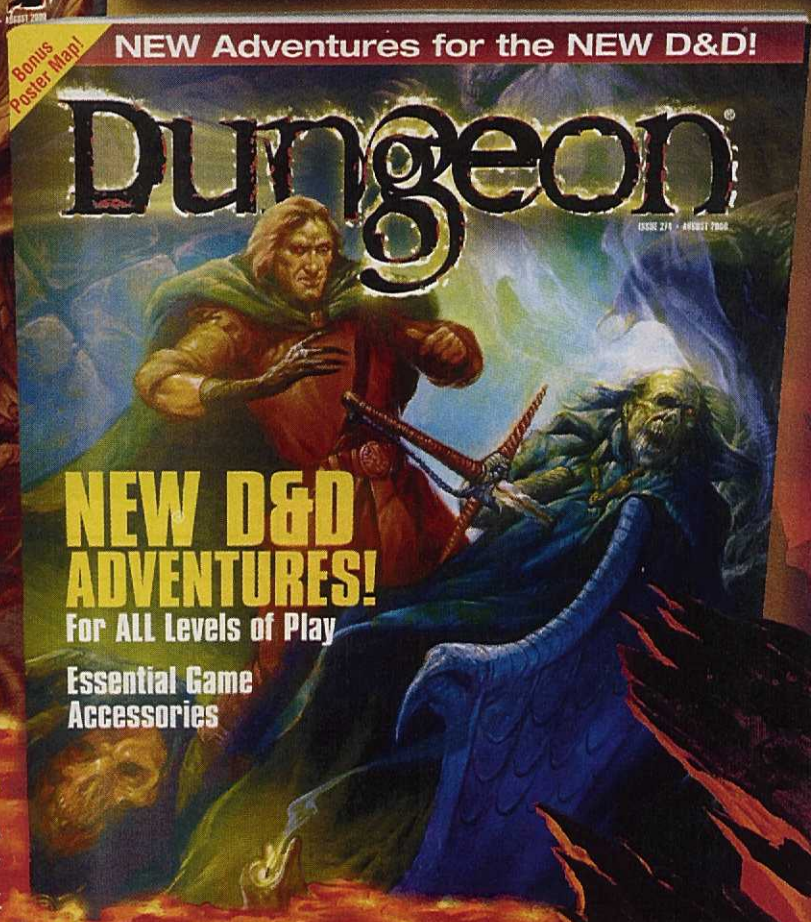

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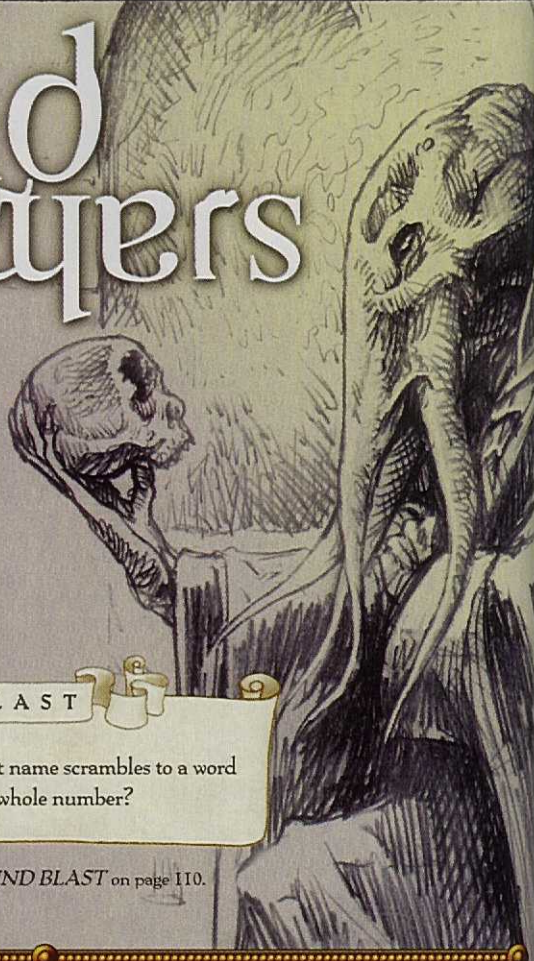
Mind Flayers



no. 15 SOLUTION

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MIND BLAST

What famed D&D hero's last name scrambles to a word meaning "expressed as the nearest whole number?

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 110.

no. 16

by Mike Selinker

The sixty-four monsters hidden below like to suggest they have nothing in common, but they're wrong. The monsters are hidden word search-style (horizontally, vertically, and diagonally). But where any two or more creatures intersect, the common letter has been removed, leaving only those letters that are in one entry. You must fill in the crossing letters and fill out the word list. When you're done, each space in the grid will contain one letter, and no letter will go unused. All monsters need at least one letter to be filled in. Remember, if you put in a letter, it must be in two or more monsters.

M			K	E	E	S				B	G			A	L			
I	E		N	O								K						
T	K		Y		A		D					S	N	A				O
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MONSTER LIST

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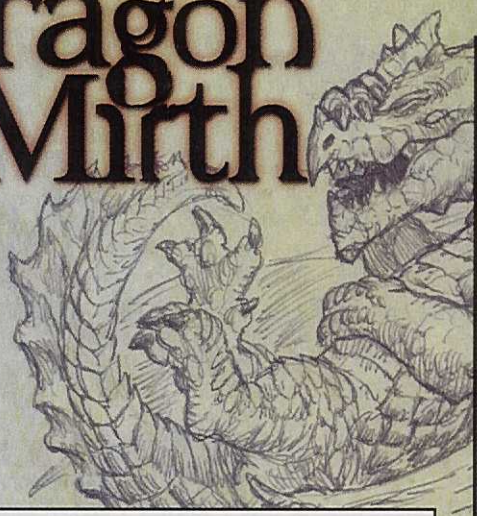

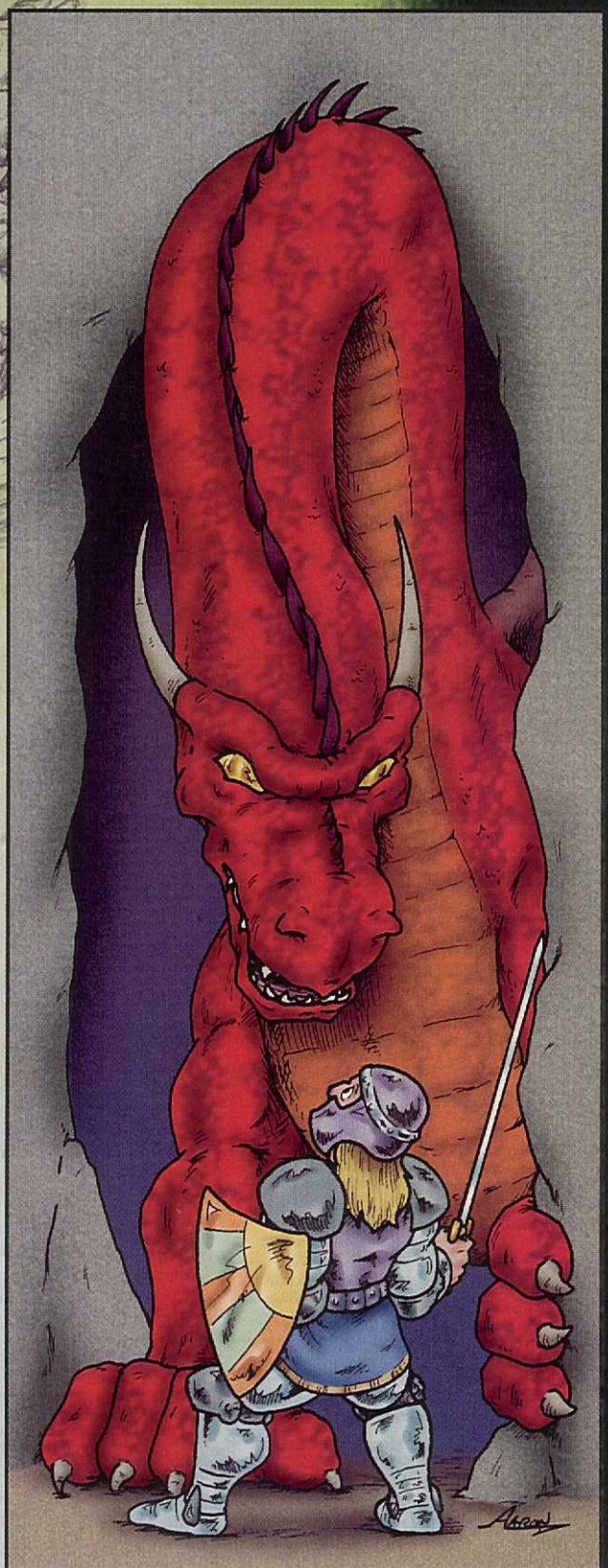

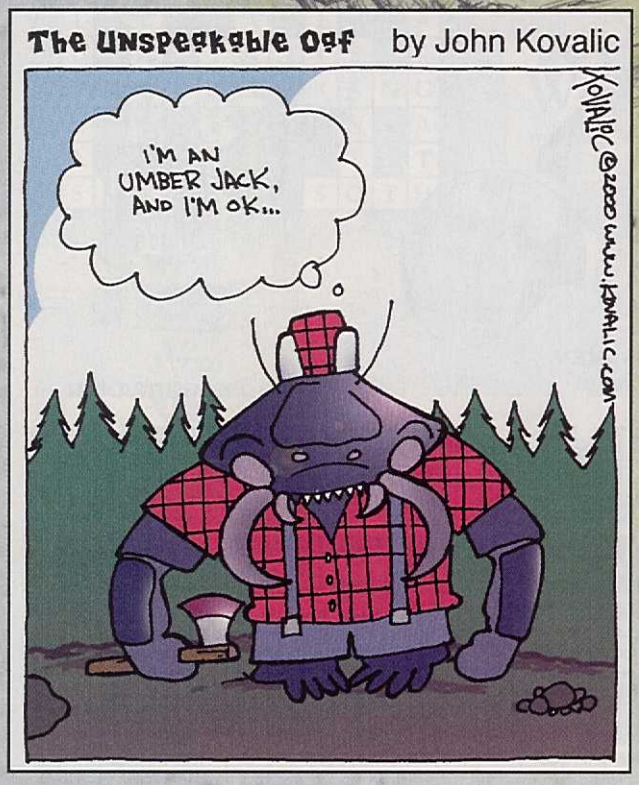

TONY MOSELY

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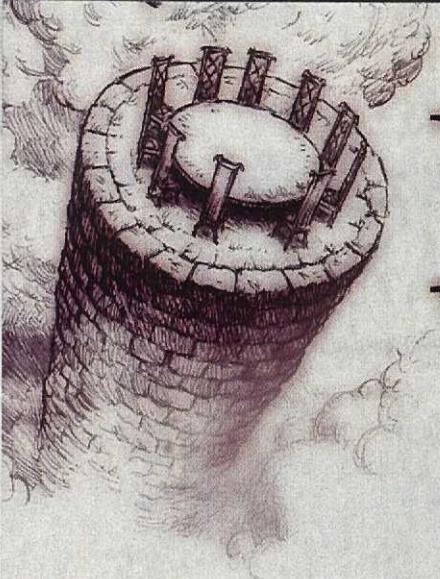

Forum

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Question of the Month

Which soundtracks and albums do you play during your D&D game?

In a word: Appalled

Over the past six months or so, I have been seeing and hearing various references to the upcoming 3rd Edition of D&D. In general, I was not particularly concerned, because I expected it to be something on the order of the revisions that were made ten years ago for the 2nd Edition. Those changes, while broad, generally simplified and improved the game, and did not make any fundamental alterations to the basic system. I did not lose any sleep over the new edition because I expected more of the same.

This new edition is not AD&D. I don't know what it is, but I know what it is not.

This weekend I visited my local game store and discovered the handy "conversion guide" Wizards of the Coast has been distributing. In only a few minutes, I realized just how wrong I was.

I am, in a word, appalled.

AD&D might be an "old school" gaming system. It might not have a lot of flashy, crowd-pleasing elements. It might be cluttered with restrictions that players who want their characters to achieve instant godhood find frustrating. But the fundamentals of the system promote game balance and long-term campaign health, and it has survived largely unchanged since the late '70s, while dozens of other systems have faded away into obscurity.

Now I discover that Wizards of the Coast has taken it upon itself to inject critical hit systems, level-based ability increases, and a whole host of other elements that essentially dynamite twenty-five years of tradition. Spells, character classes, and magic items, familiar elements that have been with us from the beginning, have had their names changed for no apparent reason. The entire combat and saving throw system has been tossed into the trash. What is left appears to be little more than a cobbled-together mishmash, tarted up to give it a superficial resemblance to the old.

And for what? I would like to believe that Wizards of the Coast is composed of people who truly enjoy gaming and have some respect for its traditions, and who would not do something like this simply to fatten their wallets. But I have a hard time coming up with an alternate explanation. The only other reason I can think of is that AD&D has been taken over by people who prefer other game systems. But if that's the case, why buy the system at all? Why not leave it alone for the millions of gamers who like it the way it is?

I realize that we live in a capitalist society. I realize that corporations have to make decisions that ensure their long-term health. I have watched, over the last ten or fifteen years, as industries like video rental, book sales, and Internet access have gradually been taken over by large conglomerates that remake them in an effort to maximize their profitability. Perhaps it was naïve of me to think that this would never happen to AD&D. Naïve, perhaps, to think of AD&D as a tradition and institution, one that would never be destroyed by the hard realities of economics. Naïve to think the love of millions of gamers would be enough to sustain it forever.

It seems that I was wrong.

This new edition is not AD&D. I don't know what it is, but I know what it is not. It is not a game I wish to play.

I am thirty-three, and I have been playing AD&D for almost twenty years now. I have sometimes wondered if I would be doing this the rest of my life. At times, I thought that I might one day drift away, distracted by the responsibilities of career and family. What I never expected was that I would feel as if I had been stabbed in the back by the game itself.

I'm going to miss it. Have fun with your new toys, Wizards of the Coast.

Thomas W. Overton • Aliso Viejo, CA

In a word: Saliva

First off, let me get the requisite gushing over the new edition done with. I am ecstatic about seeing the new edition in all its glory once it is released. So far, all the rule and class previews have driven the ol' saliva glands into overdrive. I've always striven to play characters or NPCs who were not of the generic mold that most of the classes adhered to. With the new rules, almost any character can be created and played. The almost total freedom to play whatever you want (besides a

dragon or a god), while not being able to cheat the system will attract many new players. If the alignment explanations have been re-written with as much detail to playability as have classes and skills, then the new edition will be a godsend!

I realize that not everyone likes to use every class available, and some DMs won't allow certain classes in their games. That is no reason to toss a certain class out of the game entirely. One of the main targets for such abuse is the monk. Almost every letter I've seen in the pages of *Dragon* denigrates the monk class as an abomination, or at least an oddity, not worth the time of players and DMs. There are many excuses for giving the monk a low blow. One reason is the fact that the martial monk is based on the Shaolin monks of the real world. News flash: The D&D world is *not* real life. Just because they're from a geographical location not associated with medieval myth is no reason to exclude them or belittle them. That's the same as racism. Another is that they have so many fantastic powers available to them. Well every other class has fantastic powers and neat skills or items that only they can use. Sure a high level monk can now dodge a *fireball,* but a wizard of lower level than that can raze a whole town in a few minutes with his spells. Shall we label his magical power as being unbalanced?

Most people think of kung fu when they think of a monk, and that is, to an extent, correct. But monks can also behave like Jackie Chan (comical warrior), Brother Cadfael (logical investigator), or even the peaceful Dalai Lama (teacher). The only limit is the imaginations of the player and his or her DM.

The new rules and the resurgence of old character classes is like a school reunion. The old and new students can mix and find that the best of each of their worlds add up to something better than anything they had alone. It's all up to the DMs and the players. No matter what all the rulebooks and source manuals say, remember that they are sources, not dictates chiseled in stone. If you don't like something as a DM, throw it out or change it. There is no reason it should be excluded just because you don't like it. Trust me, for every skill, class, ability, or rule you throw out, there is another DM out there who finds it invaluable.

As a little aside now that my main tirade is over, I have some comments on clerical magic and damage values, issues that were brought up in "Forum" in issue #272.

The ability of clerics to now trade their spells for healing ability does not in any way over-emphasize the role of support person or the "heals on wheels" characters that most people malign clerics to be. The new system allows clerics to retain their integral ability to heal or damage creatures while carrying a larger assortment of spells with which they can aid the party in other ways. In effect, it is meant to diminish the feeling that all a cleric is good for is healing the warrior and scaring off skeletons.

Damage values were different for the different sizes for at least one logical reason that I can see. It's a matter of percentages. A large creature such as a giant has more hit points than a lowly goblin. A longsword might do only 1d8 points to a goblin because of size. You stick a goblin with a longsword, and after the first 8-10 inches, you're out the back side and no matter how much more steel you thrust through, the only difference it will make is how much you have to draw back out of the corpse. Whereas if you stick a giant or an elephant with a longsword, most likely you will not run it through. Since the whole blade can be inside the creature, it will do more damage. But since the giant has 8-10 times as many hit points as the goblin, even with the added damage dice values you aren't doing the same percentage of damage to its life total. So while it looks like an advantage in taking on the large creatures out there, the increased damage values for weapon effects are more a tool to balance combat and give players a little crutch when taking on a much larger opponent.

Lastly, on the issue of arrows vs. bolts. Arrows and crossbow bolts should do around the same amount of damage to rigid (plate) armor. The biggest reason the French hated the English longbow was the fact that it could penetrate plate armor from a significant distance. Only the largest crossbows could compare to basic bows because their range and accuracy were slightly better. When it comes to a short bow archer vs. a crossbowman with a light crossbow, all other things being equal, always bet on the archer. His rate of fire will almost always best the crossbow's slightly better accuracy and the little bit of "oomph" it gives the bolt over the arrow. It's like comparing a semi-automatic pistol to a slingshot. Unless the guy with the slingshot is very good and very lucky to hit with his first shot, the guy with the pistol will hit him as he tries to reload his ball bearing.

Christopher Chung • Corvallis, OR

If 3rd Edition is really successful, players will be so wrapped up in the adventure that they won't be paying attention to the supporting rules.

The Sound of Inevitability

Let's face it: The new edition is coming whether we want it or not. Most of the fears I've heard have come from people worried about their own campaign settings or the fact that Wizards of the Coast is not going to support their setting. This has worried me, but I have come up with a few plans.

1. See what is in the *Conversion Manual* and use what I can of that.
2. Use the Web pages, hoping that they can supply rules for us to use.
3. Hope Wizards of the Coast reprints some of the books I need.
4. Convert the rules myself.

Each has its flaws. I doubt that the conversion book will offer all the material to convert Masque of the Red Death rules or *Chronomancer* (yes I have, and use, that book). The Web pages will be a collective work a long time coming, but *Chronomancer* is a book worthy of a conversion and reprint. (So to those at Wizards of the Coast, I hope you pay attention.) That leaves my personal favorite....

Converting official works will need the mechanics of the *Conversion Manual* and will take you awhile, but no pain, no gain.

Are the psionics rules going to

consolidate into one system and have the full range of 2nd Edition material? We can only hope so. At least if the new edition gets bogged down, we will still have "Forum" to argue over where Wizards of the Coast went wrong.

Andrew Brown • UK

It's All About the Classics

Both *Dragon Magazine* and the Wizards of the Coast website have done a great job of informing gamers about the upcoming D&D game. The free *Conversion Manual* on the website is especially helpful. I hope Wizards of the Coast will be supporting the new edition with more classic adventures.

When it comes to drumming up a game, Dungeon Masters can't interest potential new players by saying, "I have an adventure that introduces new rules." It's the challenge of the diabolical wizard, the great dragon, or the black knight that lures new players to the table. If the new edition is really successful, players will be so wrapped up in the adventure that they won't pay attention to the supporting rules.

For the 2nd Edition game, it seemed like there was an increasing focus on new character classes, new monsters, endless details about campaign settings, and new rules. I like all of these in moderation, but it's the adventures that are the lifeblood of a campaign.

It doesn't seem like Wizards of the Coast publishes as many adventures these days, and many of the recent adventures have been pretty esoteric. For example, the *Undermountain* adventures were more of a funhouse than a classic adventure. How about a return to the bread-and-butter adventures like thwart the pirates or slay the vampires? How about some series built around a classic adventure premise (like the old *Desert of Desolation* series)? How about shorter introductions to campaign settings that focus on adventure opportunities?

Here's hoping the new D&D game is a springboard back to classic adventure gaming, and that it doesn't get strangled with rules and trivia.

Jeff Herrin • Sacramento, CA

Do You Understand?

In issue #272, Mr. Roberts struck on a few issues about D&D that really hit a nerve with me and probably other gamers. I have only had about three to five pages of house rules my whole time gaming. These were then discussed with the rest of the party before being put into effect. It sounds to me like he has almost rewritten the game.

I must agree with him on the 4d6 for character generation. My group and I have used it for years.

On the subject of gnomes and halflings, I don't believe Mr. Roberts has ever had a player that really understood the two races. I've had players and have played both races myself on several occasions. The gnome might not be very adventurous, but he can be a lot of fun if the attitude is right (mischievous). All of the players who have ever played a halfling in my campaign use the curiosity of the race to add to the fun of gaming.

Also, on the subject of drow elves, they appeared long before the Forgotten Realms setting was officially published. They also appear in the *Fiend Folio* (1981).

When Mr. Gygax was not working with TSR, they needed a world to replace Greyhawk. The Realms were perfect. Nobody ever said that a DM has to use the Forgotten Realms for their campaign. Until just recently, I used my own world for DMing, but because of confusion amongst the players when we changed DMs, I decided to use the Realms.

As a player that began in the '70s, I've seen all of the changes. I wasn't happy to hear about the new edition but from what I've read it keeps up with the tradition of high quality gaming fun. A little confusing in some places, but still good.

Russ Junkin • Mannheim, Germany
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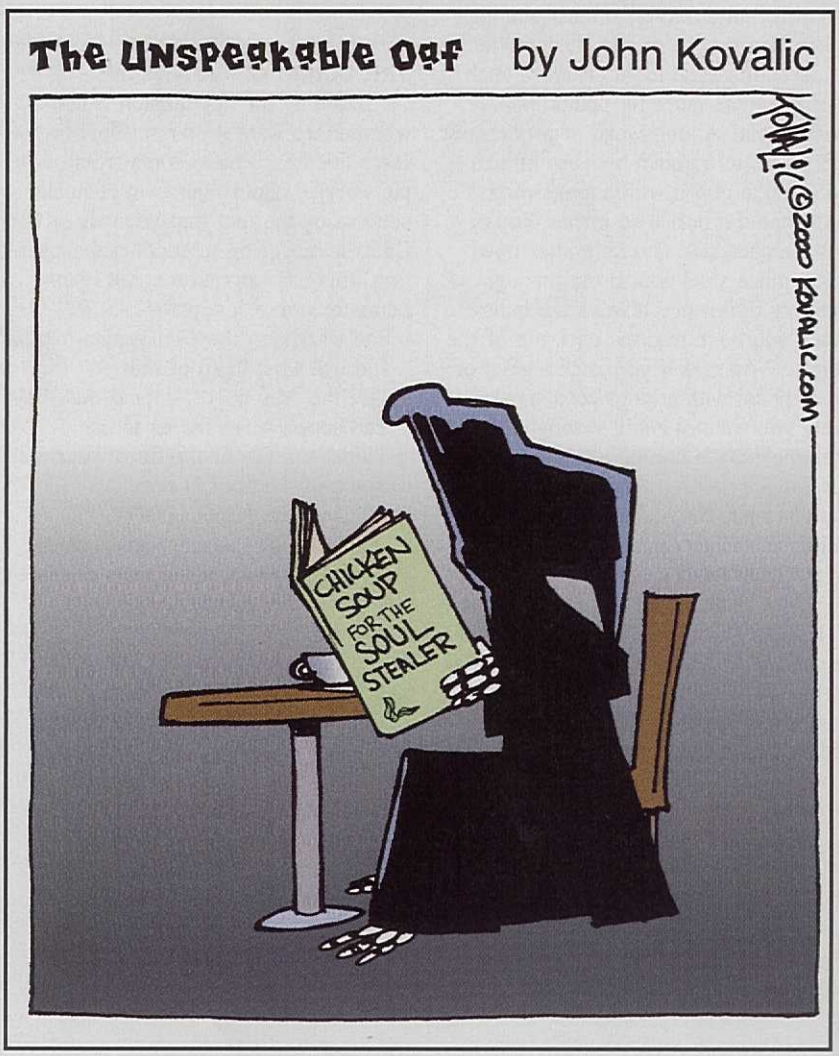

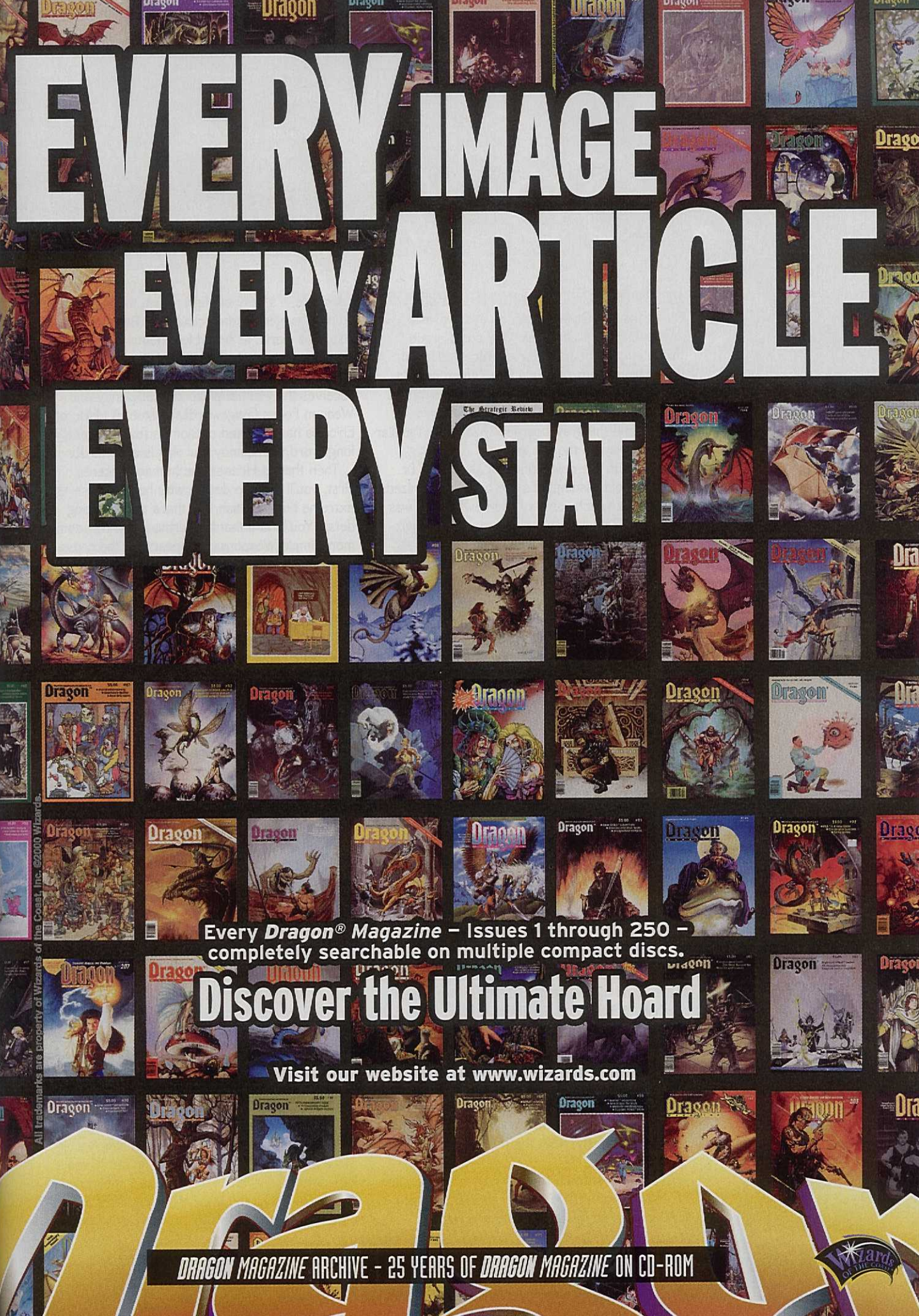
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ROLE MODELS

By Chris Pramas

Photo by Craig Cudnohufsky

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REDEFINING THE ARCHETYPES

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS has always drawn strength from archetypes. One could argue that they are the basis for character classes. Previous editions of D&D have given certain archetypes strong visual identities to reinforce their roles in the game. The plate-armored paladin and the gray-bearded wizard are familiar to D&D players the world over.

Now, with the new edition of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, old assumptions are being scrutinized. One of the watchwords of the new edition was "options." Rather than say "no swords for wizards," the new rules give you the freedom to customize your character. Now there will be consequences if you equip your wizard with a sword, but you can do it if you want to. This has a rather interesting side effect on the game's visual identity, which carries over to miniatures. Simply put, you can no longer pigeonhole people and characters just by looking at them. The rules are so flexible that even the sword-armed guy in full plate could be an arcane spell caster. He'd have a small chance of actually getting off a spell, but when he did it would be a big surprise.

The great thing about this new flexibility is the way it aids DMs. In previous editions, players could learn monster stats chapter and verse and quickly size up any threat. One glance at the opposition is not enough anymore. That scrawny looking orc could be a 10th-level fighter for all the players know. This is a big help when spinning out a story, since it ensures your players share the same uncertainty as their characters.

With all this in mind, let's take a look at some of the new miniatures. If you've read the *Player's Handbook*, you've no doubt seen the illustrations of the iconic characters like Devis the half-elf bard and Tordek the dwarf fighter. Our first releases include most of the iconic characters. This gives those who use the starting packages for their character a miniature that fits that PC exactly. However, just because we say a figure is of a particular class, there's no reason you can't use the miniature for something else entirely. With the new rules to work with, it's a snap.

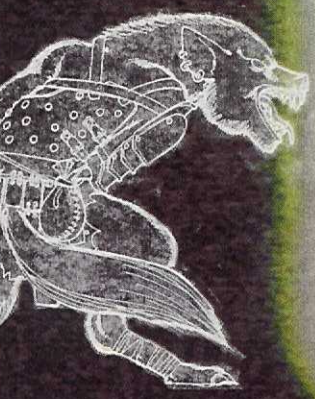
Let's start with the Regdar miniature, the classic human fighter. He's got scale mail, a shield, a longsword, and a dagger. With any fighter miniature, it's easy enough to use them as a paladin or ranger instead. However, Regdar could also be a cleric, as both Heironeous and Ehlonna favor the use of the longsword. A cleric of Heironeous who chooses the War domain receives the Martial Weapon Proficiency and Weapon Focus (longsword) for free. A cleric of Ehlonna has to spend one of his feats to get the longsword proficiency, but this is easy to do.

Then there's Hennet, the human sorcerer. First, you'll need to decide why he has the extreme buckle fetish, but that's a roleplaying detail. You'll note that he's armed with two common Simple Weapons: the spear and the crossbow. This makes Hennet useable for nearly any class. He could be a barbarian, a bard, a fighter, a monk, or a wizard. Monks don't begin the game knowing how to use spears, which means you'd either have to take a Martial Weapon Proficiency feat or clip off the spearhead to make it a staff. He could also be a half-orc cleric of Gruumsh who strongly favors his human ancestry.

Finally, there's Lidda, the halfling rogue. She's wearing leather armor and wields a short sword and a dagger. If not a rogue, Lidda is screaming to be a ranger. Since she's only wearing light armor, she can wield her sword and dagger as if she had the Two-Weapon Fighting and Ambidexterity feats- sweet! Another option is the cleric of Yondalla, whose favored weapon is the short sword.

But wait, I hear the DMs cry, what about us? Don't worry, we've saved something special for you. As you probably know, the *Monster Manual* won't be out until next month. While the "2000 Survival Kit" in the back of your *Player's Handbook* will get you started, you still lack stats for many of the monsters we've made figures for. Clearly this will not do! While we can't give you all the stats you need, we can give you a teaser of what's to come. Say hello to the new gnoll. He actually looks like he's over 7 feet tall, doesn't he? Now let's see what he can do.

If you take a look at the miniature, you'll see he's holding a big old axe. We could simply call this a greataxe and be done with it, but if you look closely you'll see the haft has a spearhead on it. This makes the weapon an urgrosh, a nasty piece of business associated with dwarves



but sometimes used by other races. This is not the weapon of a common gnoll, but that's quite all right. The new rules allow us to give monsters classes and levels, so we can easily make this gnoll a proper heavy.

The urgrosh is an Exotic Weapon, which means you must spend a feat to learn how to use it. Since it's also a double-weapon, it really helps if you have some other feats to increase your ability to use it. To get everything we need, we'll have to make this gnoll a 2nd-level fighter (which makes him a 4th-level character altogether). This lets us take the feats Ambidexterity, Exotic Weapon (Urgrosh), Improved Initiative, and Two-Weapon Fighting. Now the gnoll can use both heads of the weapon with a -2 penalty, and his Improved Initiative will help him get the drop on his enemies.

You wouldn't want to throw a bunch of gnolls like Fazgul here at a 1st-level party, but he'd make a great leader for evil humanoids. Note that he gets only +3 to hit because of the penalties associated with fighting with two weapons, but he does get the all-important double attack.

WHEN WE'RE ALL DONE, OUR NASTY GNOLL LOOKS LIKE THIS:

FAZGUL, Gnoll Fighter

FTR2
Medium Humanoid
HD 2d8 (gnoll)+2d10+4 (fighter)
hp 23
Init +6
(+2 Dex, Improved Initiative)
Spd 20 ft.
AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 scale mail)
Atk urgrosh +3 melee
(1d8+2/crit x3 with axe head, 1d6+2/crit x3 with spear head)
SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will -1
AL CE
Str 15, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Feats: Ambidexterity, Exotic Weapon (Urgrosh), Improved Initiative, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Skills: Climb +2, Jump +3, Listen +3, Spot +3.

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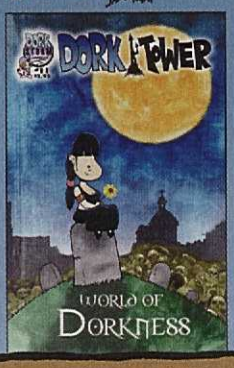

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by skip Williams
thesage@wizards.com

This month, the Sage continues to plumb the mysteries of the new D&D *Player's Handbook* and takes a few side excursions into the newly released *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Does someone who readies a weapon against a charge get his Strength modifier to attack and damage?
Yes. Attacking a charging opponent with a readied weapon is a melee attack, and all the rules for melee attacks apply.

Can someone who charges get an attack of opportunity if someone moves through his threatened area later that round?
Yes. Charging imposes an Armor Class penalty, but it doesn't keep you from threatening an area or making attacks of opportunity.

Can someone who has been tripped or is otherwise prone get an attack of opportunity if someone moves through his threatened area?
Being prone doesn't prevent you from threatening the area around you or making attacks of opportunity. Any attacks of opportunity a prone creature makes suffer the -4 attack penalty for being prone.

Can someone take an action and then ready an action to move instead of moving right after the action? A typical use for this would be the wizard who casts her spell and then readies an action to run away if someone comes after her.
You can ready any partial action. You can't take a standard action, such as casting a spell, and also ready an action. (Readying is a standard action all by itself.) Note that you can take a move after any standard action, so you can cast a spell and then move away. So, in the above example, you've got to get the heck out of Dodge right after you finish the spell.

Can you ready an action to perform a coup de grace?
No. A coup de grace is a full round action, and you can ready only partial actions.

Just how much temporary ability damage can a character heal in a day? Suppose my character has fought a battle with a couple of shadows and has been poisoned a few times. The character has suffered 4 points of Strength damage, 3 points of Constitution damage, and 1 point of Wisdom damage. The character regains 1 point of ability damage per day, so what do the character's ability scores look like after 1 day? If my character gets bed rest and regains 2 points of ability damage, what happens then?
In one day of light activity (no combat or spellcasting), the character heals 1 point of damage in each ability. After one day of bed rest, the character heals 2 points of damage in each ability.

What happens when a character who has received a *freedom of movement* spell jumps or falls into water? My DM seems to think that the character falls straight through the water and goes "splat" on the bottom. My DM explains that the spell eliminates all water resistance, which prevents the character from swimming or floating.
While the DM is always right, he's followed a faulty line of reasoning here. "Sage Advice" has always warned against using scientific—or pseudo-scientific—reasoning to adjudicate spells. In this case, your DM has erroneously supposed that water resistance has something to do with buoyancy. Buoyancy depends on the water literally pushing something up toward the surface, and a *freedom of movement* spell doesn't prevent that any more than it prevents a floor from pushing up against a character's feet and keeping him from falling through it. (You might not be in the habit of thinking of floors as "pushing" anything, but that is the way modern physics describes any object or body resting on any surface; the object pushes down and the surface pushes back with equal force.)

In any case, the *freedom of movement*

spell (and its cousin from earlier editions, the *free action* spell) has nothing to do with eliminating water resistance or friction; it allows normal movement and attacks even under conditions in which normal movement and attacks are not possible, such as underwater or when webbed, held, or entangled. Exactly how the spell accomplishes that is unrevealed—that's what makes it magic. Your DM would have been on firmer ground (as it were) if he had claimed that falling is a form of "normal movement" that water usually prevents. That, however, is not the case. "Normal movement" in water is swimming or walking along the bottom. When a character under a *freedom of movement* effect enters water, he makes a Swim check; if he fails, he cannot move, and he sinks if he fails by 5 or more. Note that failing to make progress or sinking are both "normal movement" in this instance.

I have a multiclassed character with the uncanny dodge class ability and the Deflect Arrows feat. Can she deflect arrows on a surprise round if she's the one surprised?

No. You're flat footed when you're surprised, and you can't deflect arrows when you're flat footed. Uncanny dodge lets you use your Dexterity bonus while flat footed, but it doesn't keep you from becoming flat footed. Note that uncanny dodge also does not allow you to make attacks of opportunity while flat footed.

If my PC spots a mold that causes damage, what is the DC for me to figure out what kind of mold it is? Would it be Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (nature)? What is the difference between these two skills? It seems that anything Wilderness Lore can do, Knowledge (nature) can do better, since it's such a broader field to reference. With Wilderness Lore, you can avoid getting lost—but it seems that with Knowledge (Nature), you would know what the procedure is for getting out of trouble in a natural setting.

Neither Wilderness Lore nor Knowledge (nature) lets you recognize monsters. At one time, the D&D design team discussed adding a Knowledge (monsters) skill, but we decided not to. Some DMs like their players to "play dumb" when their characters encounter a new monster, but others consider such pretense to be a nuisance, so the game doesn't have rules for recognizing monsters (which would imply rules for being ignorant about monsters).

In any case, Wilderness Lore might let you recognize the area containing the mold as hazardous (by spotting bones or by noticing that the local animals seem to avoid it). The Wilderness Lore DC for recognizing such a hazard is 15, and the mold would have to be in a wilderness setting for the Wilderness Lore skill to be of any use in recognizing the mold as a hazard.

It's possible that a character with the Knowledge (nature) skill might happen to know something about a killer mold. Noting a killer mold (or any other harmful creature that is not obviously dangerous) has a DC in the 20 to 30 range—the rarer the creature, the higher the DC.

Knowledge (nature) is not a substitute for the Wilderness Lore skill. Indeed, even today the great outdoors is sprinkled with the broken, frozen, starved, or dehydrated bodies of folks who thought they knew what they were doing outside, but really didn't. A character with the Knowledge (nature) skill might have some book learning that suggests the proper course of action in a wilderness setting, but a Knowledge skill does not impart much in the way of practical know-how. (See the next question.) At best, five ranks of Knowledge (nature) will grant a +2 synergy bonus to Wilderness Lore checks.

What are the differences between a Craft skill, a Profession skill, and a Knowledge skill?

A Craft skill involves a character making something with her hands (usually also with tools, but not always). The relevant ability for a Craft skill is Intelligence, mostly because one must remember the right materials, procedures, and techniques, as well as apply them in the proper manner.

A Profession skill also involves specialized knowledge and techniques, but usually does not involve the character working with his hands. The relevant ability for a Profession skill is Wisdom, because it usually requires the character to apply her skills in an abstract, indirect, or speculative manner. Stonemasonry is a Craft, but architecture is a Profession. A Profession skill also implies a broader, less concrete knowledge than a Craft skill does; a stonemason can build a stone house, but not a wooden one. An architect can design a house made out of almost anything. Note that the Wilderness Lore skill could be called Profession (outdoorsman), but the design team decided to break it out into its own skill because it was much more likely to see use in play than other Profession skills.

A Knowledge skill involves academic learning, usually with little practical training. The relevant ability for a Knowledge skill is Intelligence, because it involves the memorization and recall of facts. A character with Knowledge (geology) knows her stones, but she would be hard pressed to carve a statue, build a stone bridge, or dig a mine. A Knowledge skill allows a character to recall facts that might be relevant in a particular time and place but does not impart any special ability to put those facts to practical use. For example, a character lost in the woods might use a Knowledge (nature) skill to recall that moss often grows the thickest on the north side of trees. But Knowledge (nature) probably will not reveal when moss does *not* grow thickest on the north sides of trees (which is most of the time, actually). Nor will the Knowledge (nature) skill help the character remember the direction to the nearest settlement or allow the character to make sure she walks in a straight line when moving cross country.

POWER PLAY

BY SEAN K REYNOLDS

I'D RATHER BE CALLED "TRAPDODGER" THAN "TRAPSPRINGER."

Gnome: The gnomes' bonus to Hide and Listen checks make them natural spelunkers (+8 and +6 minimum with 4 ranks each), and those with a 20 Constitution and the Lightning Reflexes feat are good at dodging traps or surviving if they don't manage to dodge them. Their low-light vision coupled with their ability to cast dancing lights once a day means they can get out of tight spots even if their torches go out.

RANGED ATTACK SPELLS + POINT BLANK SHOT + PRECISE SHOT + WEAPON FOCUS ...

Any spell that involves a ranged attack roll (*flame arrow, magic stone, produce flame,* and so on) benefits from the Point Blank Shot and Precise Shot feats. If you don't take them, you're losing an additional 5% to 25% of spells of this type to simple misses. If you use a lot of ray spells, Weapon Focus (ray) is another must-have feat.

Does death touch, the granted power of the Death domain, have a saving throw?
No, it does not. The power is similar to the *power word, kill* spell—your hit points are effectively your saving throw.

Why would a fighter ever take the Quickdraw feat?
So he can draw a weapon quickly. Actually, this feat is particularly useful to fighters of 6th level or higher because the feat makes drawing a weapon a free action. That means the fighter can draw a weapon and still make a full attack action.

I plan on playing a multiclassed character. Does it matter which class I pick first?
Not really, but the class you start with strongly affects the character's hit points and skills. For example, a character gets the maximum result for her first Hit Die, so sometimes it is advisable to make that first die as large as possible, especially if you plan to have the character fight often. (A few extra hit points also makes it more likely that the character will live to see 2nd level.) On the other hand, a character's initial allotment of skill points is quadrupled for his first character level, so if you're interested in having a lot of skills, put the class that has the most skill points first.

Consider these two versions of a human 1st-level fighter/1st-level rogue: Assuming the character has Intelligence and Constitution scores of 12, the character would have 26 skill points and 13 to 18 hit points (average of 15-16) if he was a fighter first. If the same character began play as a rogue, he would have 44 skill points and 9 to 18 hit points (average of 13-14).

If one of your character's classes is paladin or monk, you'll face multiclassing restrictions. Once you quit the paladin or monk class, you can't go back. Don't put the paladin or monk class first unless you're willing to either wave the class goodbye or stick with it for a good while. (Either option is slightly easier with a human character.)

Are elves treated differently than the other races when it comes to *raise dead* and *resurrection* spells?
No. In previous versions of the D&D game, elves were hard to bring back from the dead, but that is no longer the case. Note that spells such as *raise dead* can now bring any living creature back from the dead, not just humans and humanlike creatures.

Can a paralyzed person voluntarily stop breathing to avoid drowning if submerged?
Yes. A paralyzed creature is unable to move or take physical actions, but holding one's breath is not a physical action for game purposes.

Most touch-range spells have instantaneous durations. So how do they work? Is the action that you use to cast the spell the same action that you use to touch someone? The *chill touch* spell is particularly hard to use. If it has an instantaneous duration, there is no way the caster could get multiple attacks; however, it is obvious that you are supposed to get more than one touch with it because of the number of targets.
In the case of touch-range spells, the duration refers to how long the magic lasts once you touch the target (though there are one or two oddballs, such as *shocking grasp*, which are described in a slightly different way). When you cast a spell with touch range, you can try to touch a recipient on the same round you cast the spell. See Touch Spells in Combat on page 125 of the *Player's Handbook*.

If you do not touch a recipient on the round you cast the spell, you hold the charge until you do touch a recipient or until you cast another spell. See Touch Spells and Holding the Charge on page 151 of the *Player's Handbook*.

In the case of the *chill touch* spell, the spell remains until you make your allowed number of touches (you lose one charge each time you touch something) or until you cast another spell.

If the duration of a *chill touch* spell is instantaneous, how long does the damage and Strength loss from the spell last?
The effects of a *chill touch* spell are instantaneous, but they have lasting consequences. There are many such examples in the rules. A *fireball* spell, for example, creates an instantaneous burst of fire, but the damage it causes remains behind after the spell's magical effect is gone. Normal damage from a *chill touch* (or a *fireball*) spell remains until healed or cured. The Strength damage heals at the rate of 1-2 points each day or until restored, just like any other kind of temporary ability damage. See Healing Ability Damage on page 129 of the *Player's Handbook*, as well as the question on healing ability damage above.

If I'm caught in a *web* spell, but I'm at the edge of the area of effect, can someone else outside the *web* engage in melee combat with me without getting entangled? What if they stick a spear at me? Does the spear get caught automatically, or just if it misses me?
I'm assuming that by the "edge" of a web effect, you mean that there is not 5 or more feet of webbing between you and your opponent, leaving you sort of embedded in one side of the mass of webbing. In this situation, you are subject to attack, you get no cover from the webbing, and you are entangled (with a -4 penalty to your effective Dexterity score).

Only creatures that are in the spell's area of effect when the *web* is cast can become stuck, and then only if they fail their Reflex saving throws. Creatures moving into the *web* area of effect after the spell is cast must still make Strength checks to move through the webbing. The Strength checks are full-round actions, so your opponents probably won't cut through the *web* to attack you, but they can do so without fear of getting stuck themselves.

You're poisoned with something that causes ability loss, then you're healed by a *heal* spell. Since all the poison does is cause ability damage, was the poison cured by the *heal* or will it continue to cause damage, since *heal* doesn't cure poison?
Actually, a *heal* spell does remove poison; see the third sentence in the spell description. Poison, however, deals damage until its onset time (usually 1 minute) is over or the poison is removed, even when all the damage from the poison is

somehow removed. For example, a character suffers 2 points of temporary Strength damage from a poison and is then the target of a *lesser restoration* spell before the poison's onset time is over. Even if the spell cures all the Strength damage, the character still has to make a another saving throw against the poison when the onset time expires, because *lesser restoration* doesn't remove poison, just its effects.

If a melee attack causes a saving throw every time it damages an opponent (a monster with a poisonous bite, for example), and the attack is a confirmed critical hit, are two saving throws required because damage is rolled twice?
A critical hit doesn't deliver any extra poison; however, there are special attacks that do have extra effects with critical hits. These include energy drains, ability drains, and most kinds of ability damage that are not dealt through poison. See the introduction to the *Monster Manual* (coming next month) or Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Can a monster's spell-like ability counterspell a character's spell?
A spell-like ability cannot be counterspelled, nor can it be used as a counterspell.

According to the text of the new version of the *sepia snake sigil* spell, I can write the sigil and read it myself. The "snake" will then attack the nearest creature, right?
Wrong. The letter of the current spell description is on your side, but the text is incorrect. Replace the first two sentences of the spell description with the following:

> When you cast *sepia snake sigil*, a small symbol appears in the text of one written work such as a book, scroll, or map. The text containing the symbol must be at least 25 words long. When anyone reads the text containing the symbol, the sepia snake springs into being and strikes the reader, provided there is line of effect between the symbol and the reader. Simply seeing the enspelled text is not sufficient to trigger the spell. The subject must deliberately read the text.
>
> *This piece of errata is official.*

The description of the *Summon Monster I* spell states that in the last round of the duration of the spell, the monster "acts normally." Does this mean that the monster acts normally for the type of monster it is? (That is, as if it were no longer under the control of the summoner.)
No, it means that there are no special limits on what the creature can do during the last round of the spell. It takes a normal round's worth of actions, then disappears.

If my character has a *robe of the archmagi* and is in the area of effect of a *holy aura* spell, does my character now have a 42 spell resistance?
No. The general rule against stacking similar effects applies here; the character gets only the best spell resistance. Against most effects, the character uses the spell resistance of 17 that the *robe of the archmagi* provides. Against evil spells or effects from evil opponents, the character uses the spell resistance of 25 provided by the *holy aura* spell. D

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Welcome back, folks! If you've been following along for the last twenty installments of "Dungeoncraft" (and if you haven't, fire up your Internet browser already and do something about it!), you know that we've covered a lot of ground over the last couple years. This month, I'm going to give you an opportunity to take stock of exactly what you've learned.

That's right—get ready for the first ever Dungeoncraft Pop Quiz! Now that you've completed the first game session of your new campaign, you can think of it as a sort of midterm examination. In the time-honored tradition of such exams, I'll present a series of true-false, multiple choice, and short answer questions. Some of these questions are drawn from previous installments of "Dungeoncraft"; others call upon you to apply what you've learned to entirely new situations. At the end of the column, I present some answers and a brief discussion of each question. It's important to note that my own answers aren't necessarily the right answers. If there's one thing you've probably learned from these columns so far it's that dungeoncraft is not an exact science. In fact, I'm sort of hoping that a few of these questions will spark off some intense debate. If you happen to think that my answers deserve a failing grade, don't be afraid to say so and send me your own thoughts. Maybe I'll revisit the pop quiz in a future installment and present alternative answers.

Anyway, with that out of the way, it's time to sharpen your pencils and begin. This is an open book test, though you probably won't need any of the rulebooks to answer these questions. You are welcome to use calculators, computers, cheat sheets, or anything else you might have available, although you won't need any of these things either.

True or False

1. It's a good idea to allow each player to create and run multiple PCs.
2. Hercules is not a good name for a player character.
3. You should draw a detailed map of your game world before beginning your campaign.
4. As a DM, feel free to "cheat" on your dice rolls if you like.
5. Since you're the DM, you should be familiar with all of the official rulebooks published by Wizards of the Coast, just in case one of your players wants to use a new character class or rule from a new supplement.
6. You should never roll your dice in view of the players.
7. It's okay to "borrow" rules from other roleplaying games and incorporate them into your D&D campaign.
8. You should allow the players to discover at least one "secret" about your campaign world during each session.
9. Drawing the map is the first step in designing any adventure.
10. When introducing a new NPC to your campaign, it's not always important to spend time creating all the NPC's game statistics.
11. You should hold a separate session for the sole purpose of allowing the players to create their characters before beginning your new campaign.
12. You should draw all your maps on hex paper.

Multiple Choice

1. *When designing a town that will act as the players' base of operations, which of these structures should you almost always make sure to place on the map?*
   A) A castle.
   B) An inn.
   C) A magic shop.
   D) A secret monster lair.
   E) An armory.
2. *Which of these is not necessarily a characteristic of a well-designed adventure?*
   A) Challenging the players.
   B) Rewarding the players.
   C) Challenging the players' characters.
   D) Forcing the players to solve puzzles.
   E) Presenting the players with a wide variety of options.
3. *Which of these items should you not allow the players to use during play?*
   A) The *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*.
   B) Spell description "cheat sheets."
   C) The *Player's Handbook*.
   D) Old issues of *DRAGON Magazine*.
   E) A class handbook (such as *The Fighter/Monk Handbook*).
4. *The first outdoor map you draw for your campaign should cover a radius of approximately...?*
   A) One mile.
   B) One hundred miles.
   C) Sixty miles.
   D) Five hundred miles.
   E) One thousand miles.
5. *When designing the first adventure for your campaign, which of the following should you not try especially hard to provide?*
   A) A way to introduce new PCs.
   B) Foreshadowing for some of your campaign secrets.
   C) A reusable location.

D) A recurring enemy for the PCs.
E) A situation that challenges the players.

6. *When should you invent a new secret for your campaign world?*
A) When you create a major detail about the world.
B) Once per game session.
C) When your players ask you to.
D) When you design a new adventure.
E) When any of the player characters advances in level.

7. *Which of the following is a good reason to keep your players confined to a single, small area of your campaign world for the first few months of play? (Mark as many as apply.)*
A) It takes a long time to develop appropriately detailed maps, and keeping the players confined means you'll only have to draw one map for the first several months of the campaign.
B) Such a small map will leave the players with no choice as to what they should explore next, making it easy for you to prod them into undertaking the adventures that you design.
C) Keeping the players in a relatively small area gives them an opportunity to become intimately familiar with that area, making it easier for the campaign world to develop a life of its own in the players' imaginations.
D) A and B.
E) A and C.

8. *Which of the following is not an advantage of the "third-person" style of play?*
A) It's easier for shy players to participate.
B) Third-person games tend to progress faster than first-person games.
C) Third-person games make it easy for the players to convey their characters' mannerisms and attitudes.
D) Third-person games tend to emphasize the plot or storyline.
E) Third-person games make it easier for the players to communicate what their characters are thinking or feeling.

9. *Which of the following is an acceptable "roleplaying hook" for an NPC.*
A) The NPC is hard of hearing and regularly forces everyone who speaks to him to repeat themselves.
B) The NPC hopes to one day save enough riches to open his own tavern, in order to prove to his father that he is not a failure.
C) The NPC has mysterious, homicidal mightmares.
D) The NPC is secretly jealous of his older, better-looking brother.
E) Due to an unfortunate encounter in early childhood, the NPC is particularly afraid of dragons.

10. Of the following, which is the most important skill for a Dungeon Master to develop?
A) Knowing the rules.
B) Providing good descriptions.
C) Drawing good maps.
D) Creating interesting puzzles.
E) Developing a distinct voice for each NPC.

Short Answer

1. What's the one work of fiction that every DM should keep on the bookshelf next to his rulebooks?
2. Suppose you've designed an adventure that climaxes with an evil wizard dropping a large gem into a vat of oils in order to complete a diabolical spell. The spell will summon forth a large tidal wave capable of destroying the armada of the holy army opposing the wizard. Once the gem is dropped into the vat, the oils start furiously boiling. To defeat the wizard's scheme, a particularly brave adventurer must reach the vat in time and thrust a hand into the boiling oils to retrieve the gem before the spell is complete. What game mechanic should you use to determine whether or not a PC who attempts such a task has the mettle to successfully complete it?
3. Why is it a good idea to leave notepads and pencils on the game table within reach of the players?
4. How many players should you gather together for an ideal D&D campaign?
5. Why should you insist that all the players fill out their entire character sheets before beginning play?
6. After the rulebooks and dice, what is the DM's most indispensable tool?
7. Why are giant spiders not particularly well suited to adventures designed for 1st-level characters? (Note that this question applies only to the 2nd Edition of the D&D game.)
8. Why is a 2nd-level wizard a more dangerous opponent than an ogre?
9. How often should your group get together to play D&D?
10. According to the Rules of Dungeoncraft, how should you resolve an action that is not covered by the rules when you have no real idea what to do?

ANSWERS

True or False

1. ***False.*** It's usually a bad idea to allow the players to create and run multiple characters, and it's almost always a bad idea to allow the players to run multiple characters at the same time. Sticking with one character makes it easy for the player to concentrate on developing that single personality and avoids lots of problems.
2. ***True.*** Under most circumstances, using such a noteworthy name from legend is likely to set an inappropriately silly tone for the campaign.
3. ***False.*** Don't forget the First Rule of Dungeoncraft: Never force yourself to create more than you must. It's extremely unlikely that you'll need a detailed map of your gameworld for many adventures to come, so you shouldn't waste time producing it. At the beginning of the campaign, you want to start defining your world on a very small scale.
4. ***True.*** As a DM, your primary responsibility is to insure that the players are having a good time. Sometimes the easiest way to accomplish this goal is to fudge a dice roll here and there. You should note, though, that this particular privilege is very easy to abuse. If you start fudging too many dice rolls, you run the risk of convincing the players that the dice no longer matter, potentially robbing future dice-rolling situations of their ability to create suspense.
5. ***False.*** Just because a rulebook exists doesn't mean you have to allow its use in your campaign. You should feel free to disallow any books you're not familiar or comfortable with.
6. ***False.*** There are many situations in which it is preferable to roll the dice in front of the players, particularly those in which there is a great deal of suspense surrounding the outcome of the roll.
7. ***True.*** It's okay to borrow rules, plots, names, or ideas from anywhere. Inventing details is one of the hardest tasks you face as a DM, and purloining the occasional concept from outside sources makes the burden considerably easier to bear.
8. ***False.*** If the players discovered one secret each and every session, you'd probably run out of secrets rather quickly. Allowing the players to uncover one secret per complete

adventure is a decent goal to shoot for, but you can certainly get away with an even slower pace. The only real rule is that you should reveal your secrets fast enough to keep the players interested in the game.

9. ***False.*** Drawing the map is almost never the first step in designing an adventure. Usually, the best way to begin the design process is to carefully develop the overall concept for the adventure. That way, you can identify the key locations you'll need before you start drawing the map, giving you an opportunity to make sure you include them.
10. ***True.*** Again, remember the First Rule of Dungeoncraft. You'll rarely need all of an NPC's game statistics for play. In fact, it's usually best to generate only those statistics that are unusually above or below average.
11. ***False.*** Holding a special session before you start the real game only gives your players an opportunity to lose interest and drop out prematurely. The best way to keep your players interested in what you're doing is to get them playing and keep them playing.
12. ***False.*** Hex paper makes it extremely easy to judge distances, but all those right angles typically found in dungeon passages make such environments difficult to map on hexes. Use hex paper when drawing wilderness maps and standard graph paper when mapping dungeons.

Multiple Choice

1. ***B, an inn.*** A good "rumor mill" is an essential component of a base of operations. Without such a structure, it will be difficult to get the players interested in your adventures. Much more often than not, the ideal rumor mill is an inn. While each of the other structures cited might be interesting components of a D&D town, none of them are essential.
2. ***D, forcing the players to solve puzzles.*** Remember that the Fourth Rule of Dungeoncraft states that "Good adventures always challenge the players and challenge their characters." Solving puzzles is only one strategy for challenging the players—there are others you can employ instead (such as forcing the players to make tough decisions). Each of the other listed choices is indispensable to a well-designed adventure.
3. ***A, the Dungeon Master's Guide.*** It's best to prohibit the players from using the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and the *Monster Manual* during play. This prevents them from looking up monster statistics and magic item descriptions right in the middle of a game session, providing them with an unfair (and unfun) advantage.
4. ***C, sixty miles.*** Remember, the first map you draw should concentrate on detailing that portion of the world the player characters are familiar with, as well as providing a bit more that they can explore. A scale of greater than sixty miles forces you to do unnecessary work since it's unlikely your players will be in a position to stray so far from home for a few full months of play. A smaller scale doesn't give the players enough freedom and runs the risk that they will want to travel to a region you haven't prepared.
5. ***D, a recurring enemy for PCs.*** A recurring enemy can be nice to have but is certainly not essential, particularly for a first adventure. In fact, it's usually a good idea to plan for a particular monster or NPC to become a recurring enemy before you run an adventure. Once you've become wedded to such a notion you might find yourself "steering" the players in order to guarantee that your favored villain survives to fight another day. Instead, you're much better off allowing your recurring enemies to arise naturally from the results of your adventures. It's also worth noting that each of the remaining four choices are positively indispensable to a first adventure.
6. ***A, whenever you create a major detail about the world.*** This is the First Rule of Dungeoncraft. Creating a new secret once per game session will force you to create your secrets much faster than the players can ever uncover them. Creating a new secret whenever you design an adventure will leave you with too few secrets early in your campaign, and too many later. C and E are obviously inappropriate choices.
7. ***E, A, and C. Choice B is not appropriate.*** If your map is so confining that the players never have any choice but to visit the areas you designate, you're probably making them feel like they are being manipulated.
8. ***C, third-person games make it easy for the players to convey their characters' mannerisms and attitudes.*** All of the other choices are characteristics of the third-person play style. First person, with its funny voices and hammy speeches, gives the players a much better opportunity to express their characters' mannerisms.
9. ***A, the NPC is hard of hearing and regularly forces everyone who speaks to him to repeat themselves.*** While any of the other choices might be interesting facets of an NPC, they are all too ephemeral to serve as effective roleplaying "hooks." You can reinforce the hard-of-hearing shtick every time you play the NPC, but you won't find nearly as many opportunities to employ any of the other possibilities.
10. ***B, providing good descriptions.*** Remember, Dungeoncraft breaks down into three basic fundamentals: providing descriptions, resolving actions, and deciding when to reveal information. While each of the other listed skills are extremely useful, there are strategies you can use to compensate for a shortcoming in any of them. Effectively DMing without providing good descriptions is almost impossible.

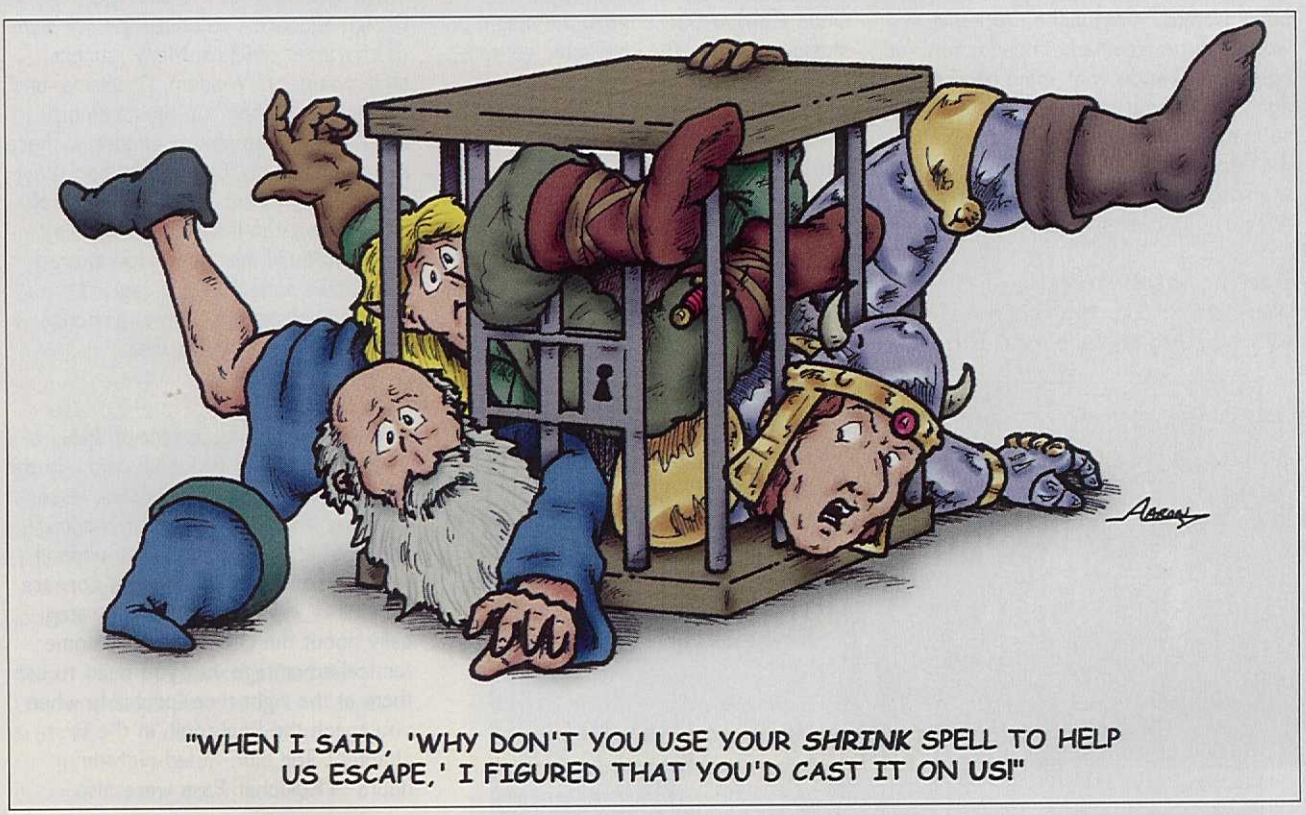
Short Answer

1. ***J.R.R. Tolkien's* The Lord of the Rings.** While D&D was influenced by a wide variety of myths, legends, and fantasy creations, there is no better summary of the game's basic spirit than Tolkien's trilogy. Plus, there are lots of practical benefits for keeping the book handy—not only is the series a fantastic source of character names, but Tolkien's lengthy appendices are a great source of inspiration for myths that you can sprinkle across your own campaign world.
2. ***A Fortitude saving throw.*** You might be tempted to call for a Constitution ability check, but a character's experience level should certainly

Catch up on past installments of Dungeoncraft at http://www.wizards.com/dragon/Welcome.asp

influence his or her chance to perform such a dramatic and heroic feat, necessitating the save.

3. ***So you and the players can occasionally pass each other secret notes.*** Sometimes you'll want to pass information to a particular player out of earshot of his colleagues. Suppose, for instance, that an adventurer scouting ahead of the others is silently ambushed and captured by goblins. There's no way the rest of the party should be aware of their comrade's peril until they reach the ambush site themselves—the goblins should receive a fair chance to ambush the rest of the party as well. Similarly, one of your players will occasionally want to signal you with his intention to undertake a secret action.
4. ***I believe that the ideal number of players in a D&D campaign ranges between six and twelve.*** (Others, including my esteemed editor, disagree.) If you have fewer than six players, you run the risk of placing the adventuring party in undue peril because key roles have been left unfilled. If you have more than twelve players, it starts to prove difficult to handle all the action and keep the group under control.
5. ***To speed play.*** Filling out the entire character sheet will guarantee that the players will precalculate all of their various bonuses, saving throws, and such. This will save a lot of time once the game starts moving. After play begins, it's a good idea to avoid interrupting the action for rules consultation as much as possible.
6. ***A DM's screen.*** Note that you don't necessarily need the official "store bought" screen, but it's very difficult to play the game without some sort of screen to hide your notes and maps. As long as you must have something propped up in front of your face, you might as well use it to house all the charts and tables you use frequently.
7. ***Because poison can kill an adventurer with a single dice roll.*** A weapon this potent should always be used sparingly and should never be employed against 1st-level adventurers. High-level adventurers tend to accumulate all sorts of spells, magic items, and abilities that will leave them with a few options even if a party member succumbs to the poison. First-level adventurers do not have access to any of these tools and consequently, a poison attack is likely to frustrate your players. Note that the new D&D game solves this problem by having most poisons inflict additional hit point damage or ability score damage.
8. ***Because the wizard is almost certainly much, much smarter.*** Failing to allow a monster or villain to take full advantage of all its abilities is one of the most common mistakes made by beginning DMs. A wizard, even a lowly 2nd-level wizard, is likely to employ all sorts of tricks, traps, and other clever means to repel intruders, while the ogre won't do much more than swing away with a club.
9. ***Roughly once a week.*** Usually, the longer the time that elapses between game sessions, the greater the likelihood that one or more players will lose interest. Playing less frequently than once a week runs too great a risk that the game will start to fall apart due to inactivity. Playing more often than once a week is possible, of course, but few DMs have that sort of spare time available.
10. ***The Third Rule of Dungeoncraft instructs you to roll a d6; 1-3 the action succeeds, 4-6 the action fails.*** When you're absolutely stuck, just flip a coin (or perform the die rolling equivalent), and move on. You're bound to find that this ersatz system is "good enough" so long as you keep the action moving. D



silicon sorcery snow 06

Five Things Stolen from *Icewind Dale*

by Johnny Wilson

An icy premise, an avalanche of action, and a glacial proportion of evil are the key ingredients to *Icewind Dale*, Interplay's latest DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure.

Book Learning

If I were going to compile a list of "Five Things DMs Should Steal from Computer Games," one of the top items would be the cinematic introduction and cut-scene. I know that some producers don't care about such features because so many gamers click right past both the introduction and the cut-scene sequences, but well-designed expositions can have significant impact.

THEFT #1: INTRODUCTIONS

Use short introductions and transitions with impact to advance the story within your campaign. In-game expositions are best (if they don't take too long) and should always be designed to motivate your group onward. Printed exposition is also welcome because the party can read it on their own time without disrupting the flow of the game.

Character Over Caricature

Once *Icewind Dale* begins, the magic starts to occur. The character generator not only lets you design accurate 2nd Edition DUNGEONS & DRAGONS characters and customize their appearance, but it also allows you to select the voices of your characters from an assortment of sound samples. Fortunately, that isn't the limit of what *Icewind Dale* does with your character. As in *BALDUR'S GATE*, the game pays attention to the race of the lead character and her attributes whenever non-player characters are encountered. A dwarf in a hamlet where dwarves are not often seen can be viewed as a threat. A character with a high Charisma ability score might elicit more cooperation from NPCs. In one encounter, placing my bard as leader was the key to communicating with a siren. In another, it was the singing of this same bard that allowed the party to get both experience and a better deal at the local emporium. In addition, the game rewards certain efforts at diplomacy, even if the particular negotiation isn't successful.

THEFT #2: DUMP STAT SCENARIOS

Design scenarios to utilize the full slate of character abilities. Many gamers strip points off Wisdom, Charisma, and Intelligence to beef up their combat skills because combat is almost all there is to a campaign. Encounters requiring bluffing, diplomacy, empathy, or problem-solving can inspire your gaming group to build more rounded characters. Make sure that you reward non-combat actions with experience points to reinforce this idea.

Dark Shadows

Another interesting aspect of *Icewind Dale* is the use of reduced vision. In the crypts of the Vale of Shadows, lesser shadows literally flow out of shadowy nooks while ghouls and other undead wait in deadly ambush in dark corners. *Potions of infravision* placed strategically about the crypts provide some tactical advantage, but you need to use them at the right time (probably when you reach the final tomb in the first chapter). The blue-tinted nighttime hours in Kuldahar Pass were also

GREGORIAN VAMP

The party glows after a cleric casts a chant *spell to provide positive modifiers for his allies and negative modifiers for his enemies.*

GOLDEN FLEECE?
Killing yeti (both those with silver and golden fur) yields pelts that can be sold at the nearest emporium. Beware the weight factor—too many pelts can slow your warriors down.

interesting, as goblins and wolves were more likely to ambush you during those hours than in the white, snowy daytime.

Theft #3: Terrain

Use the terrain conditions. If sight is limited, surprise the adventurers with occasional ambushes. With miniatures, hidden movement can be handled via the paper cup strategy described in "Pop-Up Terrain" in the "Role Models" column of *Dragon Magazine* #265. Another way to add suspense to limited vision is to place a Stratego piece, domino or chess piece to represent each tree, rock, or bush where someone or something might be hiding. Assign a monster, NPC or "No Encounter" to each boardgame piece and allow the party to choose their path through the darkened terrain by picking a given number of game pieces. When encounters are triggered, roll for surprise and resolve the encounter normally.

Design for Depth

Suspended disbelief increases with the amount of detail provided for the imaginary world. In *Icewind Dale*, you'll find a temple that celebrates rituals like the "Song of the Sword," "Feast of Heroes," and "Song for the Fallen." In another locale, you'll discover the secrets of the druids of Silvanus. At a local emporium, you can purchase the multi-part *History of the North* books to assist you in knowing more about the world in which you are adventuring. Such collateral material makes it much more interesting to interact with the imaginary world. You never know what detail might help you in your quest, so you continue your journey of discovery.

Theft #4: Miscellaneous Culture

Use new maps, diagrams, torn pages from books, messages, and encounters to fill in the gaps surrounding your culture. Closing down a shop for a holiday the adventurers aren't used to celebrating, having the party eavesdrop on a religious ritual, or filling the party's ears with political propaganda from a drunken civic leader are interesting ways to supplement the imaginary world-view of your campaign.

You've Got to Move It

The fact that there are various speeds in every adventuring party (armor being the most common factor in making some PCs slower than others) means there has to be close coordination among the player characters. In *Icewind Dale*, faster characters often rush ahead of slower-moving characters—to their doom sometimes as they pass through an entryway and are attacked before the heavier-armored characters.

The lesson to be learned from this is that it's important for everyone to arrive at the battle at the same time, if possible, and use speed to your maneuvering advantage—not as a way to rush into combat. A fast character can use speed to flank a monster or chase down ones that might otherwise get away.

In *Icewind Dale*, there is no way for two mages to cast a spell on a target simultaneously during combat. However, in the D&D game, if two mages operating at the same place in the initiative track and having the same Dexterity both cast spells, their spells might be considered by the DM to occur simultaneously. Those DMs need to be prepared to adjudicate simultaneous spell effects.

Theft #5: Moving Combat

Keep the combat moving. Make sure everyone gets a fair shot at the bad guys, but don't wait an inordinate amount of time for a person to consider what they're doing. Be creative! When simultaneous spells are cast on the same target, don't be afraid to use your imagination to create a unique synergy that can occur randomly. (If it always occurred, the party would grow to depend on it.) What if a priest was casting *magic stone* at the same time a wizard was casting *Vampiric Touch*? Could the wizard gain the damage from the *magic stone* as well as his spell? Might the wizard lose the points from the *magic stone* off his extra hit points generated from his spell? Such unexpected synergy could keep things interesting.

TOPOGRAPHICAL WRAP
As in computer games, maps can not only speed up play for your party, but they add to the sense of suspended disbelief for your world.

MARCH OF CRIME
The AI sometimes does its job too well. As pictured here, you can set the marching order with your strongest and best armored warriors in the lead, but when you go through the door, you may discover your faster and less protected adventurers have run ahead.

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CORRECT. I THINK THERE'S TOO MUCH FIGHTING IN GAMING. IT SETS A BAD EXAMPLE FOR REAL LIFE.
OKAY - SO LET'S SEE HOW YOU DEAL WITH A BELLIGERENT FIGHTER
GIVE ME TREASURE.
MAKE WAR NO MORE.
WELL, HI! SURELY WE CAN ALL GET ALONG AS FELLOW TRAVELLERS HERE ON SPACESHIP EARTH. WE COULD ALL SING A SONG -
GIVE ME TREASURE.
WHAM!
AH HAHAHA! THAT'S THE SPIRIT! SAY, HOW'D YOU LIKE TO WORK FOR ME? WE HAVE A GENEROUS PROFIT SHARING PLAN, AND-
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GIVE ME TREASURE!
SMAK!
WHOA! WITH AN ATTITUDE LIKE THAT YOU MUST HAVE SOME REAL ISSUES ABOUT YOUR PARENTS. WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT, BIG GUY?
GIVE ME TREASURE!!
CRUNCH!
IN... IN ALL FAIRNESS - I SHOULD MENTION THAT I HAVE AN INCREDIBLY INFECTIOUS COLD AND
GIVE ME TREASURE!!
IS THERE A POINT TO THIS?
YOU WON'T BELIEVE THE EXPERIENCE POINTS I GET FOR 'PLAYING IN CHARACTER'.
WHAM WHAM WHAM
HRK!
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Death of a Dragon
With author **Ed Greenwood**

August 8, 6:00 PM (PDT)
Magic® Deck Deconstruction
Deconstructing Worlds Decks
With former Pro Tour player **Randy Buehler**

August 18, 6:00 PM (PDT)
The *D&D® Adventure Game*
With designers **Jonathan Tweet** and **Jason Carl**

August 22, 6:00 PM (PDT)
Wizards Profiles
With Wizards CEO **Peter Adkison**

August 25, 6:00 PM (PDT)
Pokémon TCG Gym: Heroes
With R&D's **Mike Elliott**

August 27, 6:00 PM (PDT)
Sage Advice Live!
D&D Conversion Issues
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